

Implementing the Workforce Investment Act

PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE IN ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER OPERATIONS



A Guide for Workforce Boards

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Better!***

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Foreword

This guidebook is designed to help local Workforce Boards carry out their obligations under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). WIA gives local boards broad responsibility to insure that employment and training programs in their communities operate at a high level of quality and satisfy the expectations and needs of their customers. But local boards will not generally provide direct services to jobseekers and employers; they will oversee the provision of services by independent organizations, many of whom have no direct reporting relationship to the board. In this situation, the board's only means of assuring quality operations is to use its specific authority to "designate and certify" the eligibility of local program agencies who wish to operate one-stop career centers or provide specific training programs or other services under the aegis of the board. The local board provides the equivalent of a *Consumer Reports* rating which will encourage (or discourage) potential customers to enroll in a particular class or sign up for a service offered by the agency in question.

This "quality assurance" role is a new one for most local boards. It is made more difficult by the fact that the programs being evaluated are often quite different from each other. They have historically enrolled different types of clients, performed different services for them, and expected different levels of success. The board is faced with the problem of developing a single yardstick with which to attempt to measure the proverbial apples and oranges.

This guidebook, *Performance Excellence in One-Stop Career Center Operations*, will help local workforce boards build that yardstick. It uses the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Criteria to develop a process by which the board can collect and use relevant information from "supplier" agencies to determine their commitment to and their success in pursuing quality operations, customer satisfaction and continuous improvement. It lays out a foundation for building an on-going relationship between the board, one-stop centers and service providers that reinforces their mutual quest for ever higher levels of quality outcomes for customers. It provides real-world examples of what some progressive Workforce Boards and other organizations are doing in the area of quality assurance. And it contains worksheets and templates to help you design your own organizational self-assessment, review and evaluation programs.

Performance Excellence in One-Stop Career Center Operations will help if you are on the staff or are a board member of:

- A local or state Workforce Investment Board
- A One-Stop career center operator or affiliate
- An employment and training service provider
- A state employment and training agency
- An employer or business association involved in local workforce development efforts
- Any organization involved with or interested in quality assurance and continuous improvement

This Guidebook is one of the **Simply Better!** series of continuous improvement tools and learning materials which include: *The Self-Assessment System, Service by Design, The Voice of the Customer, Measuring Success, Customers in Focus, and Case Studies in Quality*. Each **Simply Better!** product is designed to help you learn, grow, and act in ways which support the continuous improvement of your workforce development efforts.

Acknowledgments

Assuring Quality Operations at One-Stop Career Centers: A Guide for Workforce Boards was written by Brian Tell under the direction of the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW), an Ann Arbor, Michigan, nonprofit corporation which assists state and local workforce development organizations to design and implement quality workforce development systems. The **Simply Better!** Team wishes to thank Mr. Tell and CSW for their efforts in developing this Guidebook. We would also like to thank the following organizations which provided much of the material used in its research, writing and production: American Society for Quality (ASQ); Boston Private Industry Council; Career Resources, Inc.; Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF); Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry; The Enterprise; Louisville/Jefferson County Workforce Investment Board; Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award at the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST); North Carolina Commission on Workforce Development; San Diego Workforce Partnership; Strumpf Associates: Center for Strategic Change; WorkSource Alliance; and this product's project team of James Aaron and Joseph Fischer.

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Table of Contents

Foreword	iii
Overview: How to Use this Guidebook	1
Section One: The New Workforce Investment Landscape.....	3
Section Two: The Baldrige Framework.....	14
Section Three: Examples of Existing Public-Sector Quality Assurance Programs	20
Section Four: A Quality Assurance Model for Workforce Investment Systems	29
Conclusion	50
Appendix: Tools and Templates.....	53

Overview: How to Use this Guidebook

This Guidebook describes a quality assurance model for workforce investment systems that is centered on the practice of supplier certification and which is founded on the principles underlying the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Criteria. If terms and concepts such as “quality assurance,” “workforce investment,” “supplier certification,” and “the Baldrige Award” are brand new to you; don’t worry. This Guidebook is especially meant for the workforce development professional who, for a variety of reasons, may not be well-versed in the language and ideas of what is called the “quality movement.” This Guidebook is organized as follows:

Section One reviews the landscape of the new workforce investment system. It includes discussion of some basic concepts underlying the new system, such as “systems,” “quality,” and “certification,” and explores the role of quality assurance in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Section Two presents the framework of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award on which many quality assurance efforts, including the **Simply Better!** series of products and tools, are based.

Section Three reviews current quality assurance processes being used around the country in the public sector, particularly in One-Stop systems.

Section Four describes a quality assurance model for workforce investment systems which is based on the Baldrige Award’s framework, as well as several of the practices identified in this Guidebook.

The Appendix contains tools and templates for you to use in the creation or improvement of your local quality assurance process. All of the examples are generic templates that can be freely adapted to help you capture and address the unique characteristics of your local workforce investment system. Also included is bibliographical information for the sources consulted in assembling this Guidebook.

It is recommended that you read Sections One, Two, and Three prior to jumping into the model in Section Four or running to the copy machine to copy the tools in the Appendix. There is a strong temptation, in our very busy lives, to want to immediately get to the core of something. We want the answers fast and simple so we can move on to whatever we think should be the next phase of our day, week, month, project, career, or life. But the whole notion of pursuing quality means that there are no quick and easy solutions, and no absolute guarantees of success.

So, even if you are already somewhat familiar with the Baldrige Award or the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, it is still a good idea to immerse yourself in the ideas and concepts behind them, because they are ultimately the foundation upon which this Guidebook’s model of quality assurance is based. Then, as you discover in Section Three how other state and local agencies have begun to recast their local systems using the Baldrige Award criteria and the Workforce Investment Act as building blocks, you can turn to Section Four with your mind chock full of new ideas.

After all, if you skip the first three sections and simply open to Section Four and begin reading the model, you will likely be reading it from your usual perspective—the mindset that you have brought to work with you everyday for the past several years. The way to get the most out of this Guidebook is to step outside your comfort zone and suspend your usual way of flipping through handbooks and toolkits looking for that “golden nugget” to just jump out at you. Take the time to really read this Guidebook. It is relatively short, and a fairly easy read. Then, the ideas and examples presented in Section Four will have some meaning to you, and you will be able to consider them openly and honestly.

Below are the three main phases of the quality assurance model described in Section Four. Look at them quickly now, as an introduction, and then tuck them away in your mind to revisit later.

Phase One - Initial Certification of One-Stop career center operators, affiliates, education and training providers, and other organizations or partners which supply services and products to your local workforce investment system.

Phase Two - Performance Assessment/Continuous Improvement of your entire local system, including linking performance goals with well-defined continuous improvement requirements.

Phase Three - Recertification of operators, affiliates, education and training providers, and others.

If there is any single overarching goal of this Guidebook, it is to help you to create a new framework for how stakeholder organizations within your local workforce system (and individual employees and members of those organizations) relate to each other. **You will be able to use this framework to judge the capacity and operating philosophy of competing service providers, to certify one-stop career centers, and to provide subsequent oversight and performance management.**

The strength of the quality assurance model in this Guidebook is that it is founded on time-tested means of defining (or redefining) roles and constructing ongoing relations between mutual stakeholders. In fact, it is the commitment to flexibility and the continuous improvement of stakeholder roles and relations after a partnership agreement, memorandum of understanding or contract has been signed which is at the heart of what it means to build “quality” into our workforce investment systems.

Section One: The New Workforce Investment Landscape

SYSTEMS

If you are like most people, the whole notion of a workforce investment system is not only new, but difficult to envision. What is actually meant by “workforce investment” and how can there be a system of it? We talk about political systems, weather systems, information systems, and even employment and training systems. But how many of us can point out the window and say, “Look, there’s a system?” Systems are big things; bigger than any one person and it can be a daunting task to try and describe them.

What a System Is and Isn’t

The new quality landscape grew out of an environment in which what was called the employment and training “system” was really, upon closer scrutiny, not a system at all. Rather, what existed was an enormous collection of federal and state agencies and programs each with its own set of legislative histories and mandates, administrative policies and procedures, and its own set of services and products. As a result, individuals and employers who accessed one of these agencies or programs would often find that the range of possible services was limited to whatever that agency or program had to offer. If the individual or company had other needs, these were often left unmet or, worse, undiscovered.

It wasn’t that their needs couldn’t have been met by another program with another set of services and expertise. It was just that too often staff at local, state and federal employment and training agencies did not possess adequate information, training and incentive to know what resources were available elsewhere and how to help connect customers to those resources. And, in those cases where customers were able to access services through multiple programs, getting their needs met was further confounded by having to fill out stacks of similar forms at each agency, being assigned multiple case managers, and then finding out that obtaining information and decisions about their “case” often took days and weeks because of an inability of one agency’s computer system to talk to another’s.

Clearly, this is not a system. Or if it is, it isn’t a functioning one. What, then, do people mean when they call something a system? Webster’s New World Dictionary, Third College Edition, defines system as “a set or arrangement of things so related or connected as to form a unity or organic whole; an established way of doing something; method; procedure.”

Stop! & Reflect...

Does your local workforce development environment still look like this?

Certainly, each organization in your local workforce area does have its own system, i.e., its own methods and procedures, its own way of doing things. But as an aggregate, are they all connected in such a way that they are perceived by customers as an organic whole, operating together toward common goals and objectives? Is there even consensus among your local workforce development stakeholders as to who the customers are? Probably not. Yet, it is this broader view of what a system is that is behind the pursuit of quality.

A Systems Approach

Beyond the perimeter of the employment and training “system,” U.S. businesses have been experiencing, and responding to, rapid and far-reaching changes resulting from increased competition in a growing global marketplace. In order to compete, companies are redefining organizational structures, skill requirements, and jobs. They are integrating technology into all work processes, reducing layers of management, and distributing authority for decision-making more widely throughout their organizations. What has become clear is that how businesses manage these changes is the key to success or failure in the global economy. Businesses that have fared well all share a common characteristic: they have fundamentally transformed the ways in which they relate to other organizations, and how their employees relate to other individuals both within and beyond their own organization.

While there are numerous tools, techniques, and strategies for how an organization can transform the way it does business (you’ve probably heard of or even had experience with some of them, such as Total Quality Management, Business Process Reengineering, Learning Organization, etc.), they are all premised on what is known as a systems approach. Basically, a systems approach to business transformation is an approach in which every function, every process, every department or work unit, and every employee in the organization is viewed as having equal influence over and input into whether or not the organization succeeds or fails at meeting its long-range goals and objectives. But it doesn’t stop there. Each employee or member of an organization has contact with a variety of other individuals outside of the organization, such as customers, suppliers, service providers, shareholders, board members, and peers and colleagues within the same field or industry. A systems approach means taking all of these relationships into consideration and exhausting all possibilities for opportunities to improve and grow.

In terms of why you are reading this Guidebook, a systems approach is what is driving the transformation of the old employment and training system into what we are now calling the workforce investment system. “Workforce investment” is a big concept, just like “system.” Here is one definition, developed by the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce:

Workforce investment includes all of the public and private investments and activities undertaken to ensure that individuals both are employable and have jobs, and simultaneously to ensure that companies can find and develop the skilled workforce they need to be successful in the world marketplace.

As you can see, “employment and training” does not appear anywhere in this definition. Employment and training are implied, but they are not the only functions for which services, activities, and products need to be developed. Instead, what this definition makes clear is that in order to be a viable part of the communities in which we operate—communities comprised of individuals and employers striving to gain a competitive edge—our vision of a system must be vastly broader than just “employment and training.” It must include all functions which are necessary to help grow a highly skilled U.S. workforce.



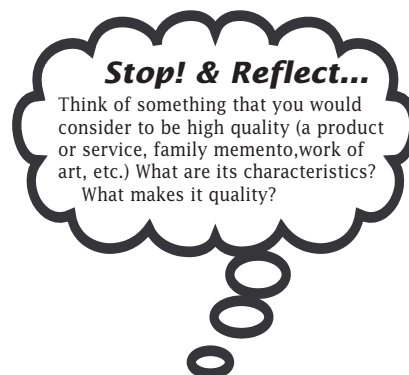
Stop! & Reflect...

How many people do you come in contact with each day? How do they affect how well you do your job and how well your organization performs?

What are some of these other functions? Helping to prepare all people, not just those who are chronically unemployed, for work and careers. This includes adults already in the workforce as well as high school and college students just starting out in their careers. Another important function is to help employers in our community to find the right employees, i.e. those with the appropriate training, skills and interest in working for our employers. And when it comes to training and acquiring skills, our vision of a system must encompass all settings and activities in which learning takes place, whether done in K-12 schools, community colleges, universities, community-based organizations, at companies, on-line via the Internet, or on-site at career centers and employment agencies.

Essentially, a systems approach to workforce investment means we can't just be concerned with what goes on inside our own offices. When we conceptualize a workforce investment system, we are not just talking about setting up one physical location and calling it a career center. Rather, we are envisioning a system that includes multiple, integrated access points, strategically placed to allow a maximum number of customers to obtain the information and services they need and want.

Our customers do not appear to us out of a vacuum. We are not the sole influence over how well a person will succeed in a training program or in a job. We are only one small part of a much larger picture. But it is our responsibility—as workforce investment professionals—to be constantly aware of, and take an active stance in nurturing and coordinating, the multiple ways in which our customers may access services, activities, and products to help them achieve their education, career or workforce development goals. This awareness, nurturing, and coordinating is what quality is all about.



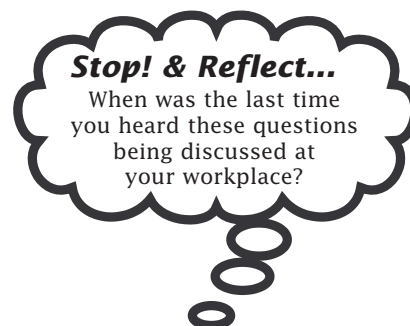
QUALITY ASSURANCE

For our purposes, quality can be simply defined as any of the features which give something a degree of excellence or superiority. The American Society for Quality (ASQ) defines quality as: 1) the characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs, and 2) a product or service free of deficiencies. If we look at these definitions in light of all of the various philosophies, strategies, tools, and techniques that constitute what has been called the “quality movement,” it is easy to understand that, in the end, everyone is shooting for the same thing: to do what they do best and to do it better; better than their competitors and better than they themselves used to do it. The problem is, it isn't always easy to figure out what it is that we do best.

Sometimes it's even difficult knowing where to start. One thing all of the quality gurus agree upon is that in order to identify those aspects of our organization at which we excel, *the only place to start is with the customer.*

If we want our enterprise to succeed—whether it’s a business, a nonprofit organization, a school, a public agency, or a coordinated system which includes all of these—we have to ask ourselves and then set out to answer several questions:

- *Who are our current customers or end-users of our products?*
- *What is it about our products and services that they find appealing or useful?*
- *Are they satisfied with what we offer?*
- *If not, how can we improve?*
- *Are our current customers the customers we want?*
- *If not, who do we want as our customers and what do we have to do to make them want to come to us, repeatedly?*



Customer Satisfaction and Continuous Improvement

As these questions reflect, two very important concepts related to quality are *customer satisfaction* and *continuous improvement*. Customer satisfaction and continuous improvement have been important in the private sector for many years and are fast becoming the way that even the public sector operates and measures itself. Why? Because organizations which have focused on continuously improving in ways that expressly satisfy their customers have experienced marked improvements in the quality of their products and services and, subsequently, better business results.

It makes sense. If our customers are unsatisfied, they won’t think twice about disappearing from our sight and finding another resource that can help them. And because customers are more savvy and knowledgeable than they have ever been, the only way to keep them coming back is to always remain one step ahead of them; to continuously improve. We have to know what they want and need; why they want and need it; how they want to access it; how much they are willing to pay for it; and, most importantly, when and why their wants and needs are changing from what they formerly wanted and needed. Every aspect of our organizations must be in tune with the wants and needs of the customer: our short- and long-range business goals and objectives, our management structure, job descriptions, administrative policies and, especially, our work processes.

In the simplest of terms, then, “quality assurance” is the idea that people care enough about what they are doing to want to always do the best they possibly can. Individual job seekers and employers in our communities must not experience frustration or dead-ends when they come to us for information, services, and products to help them achieve their education, career, or workforce development objectives. Whether our customers are students, career surfers, welfare recipients, veterans, young people, old people, people with graduate degrees, people with GEDs, large manufacturers, medium-sized hospitals, or small computer firms, they are the reason we are here, doing what we are doing. We must do our best to guarantee their satisfaction.

THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

Much of the new thinking about quality in workforce investment has been codified in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The Act is structured to allow each community to create a functional workforce investment system which is locally-designed, locally-driven, and, if possible within a state's One-Stop vision, locally-accountable. Essentially, the Workforce Investment Act has given us the "go ahead" to do whatever it takes to build quality into our local system. The Act's purpose is clearly stated:

To provide workforce investment activities that increase participants' employment, retention, earnings, and skill attainment and, as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the nation.

The Act envisions a system which strives for high performance rather than settling for compliance levels of performance, and which delivers unparalleled levels of services to customers.

*(For a more detailed rationale of the need for a new high performance management framework in workforce development, see the **Simply Better!** product, *Measuring Success in Workforce Development Programs*.)*

Let's look at some of the major components of the Workforce Investment Act: *One-Stop Career Centers, Workforce Investment Boards, and Individual Training Accounts.*

One-Stop Career Centers

One-Stop Career Centers are envisioned in the Act as the primary vehicle for creating a workforce investment system that is organized around customer needs and demands, rather than around programs and funding sources. Career Centers play two fundamental roles within the system:

1. *They provide simple access to the entire array of employment, education, training, and workforce development services available to the customer.*
2. *They serve as a reliable and impartial source of many kinds of information, including the availability and quality of education and training options, labor market information, job and candidate availability, career and skill assessment, and financial aid alternatives.*

Career Centers offer a set of core services to all customers who want them, without eligibility requirements. The intent is to make access to these services easy and customer-friendly, and to provide both individuals and employers with the information they need to make good choices about their education, training and/or employment-related needs. The Career Center initiative requires integration of services across agencies and programs, to reduce redundancy, to improve customer access, and to improve quality. This last point is crucial: for One-Stops to succeed, they must be established and operated as very high quality service organizations, continuously improving to exceed customer expectations.

Each local area is required to have at least one physical “full service” center at which customers can access services from each of the One-Stop partners. This comprehensive center can be augmented by additional “full service” centers or through a network of affiliate sites. Affiliates are service providers which do not provide the full range of services normally associated with a full career center but which are able to provide access to at least the core services, often through electronic means.

In each area, a One-Stop operator (or operators) is designated to manage the day-to-day functioning of the local centers. It is important to remember that under the Act an operator can be either a single organization, such as a non-profit agency or association, a community college, a private company, a local or state government agency, or it can be a partnership comprised of at least three different organizations.

Workforce Investment Boards

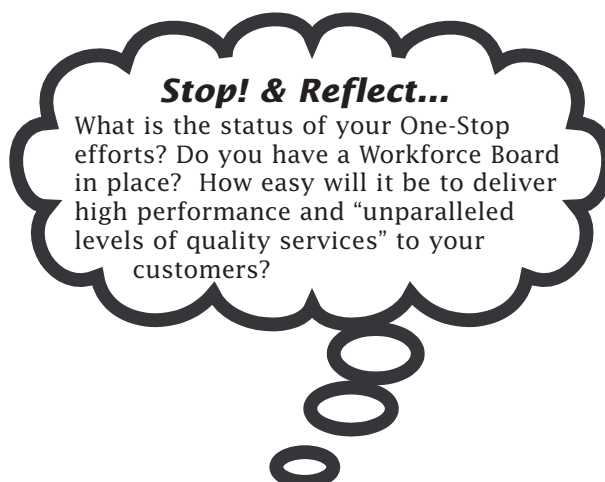
A Workforce Investment Board (or Workforce Board, Workforce Development Board, Regional Employment Board, Workforce Investment Council, etc.) is a policy and oversight entity which is responsible for organizing a comprehensive, community-wide response to the challenges of building a highly skilled workforce. Many states and local communities have already created Workforce Investment Boards; some have transformed their Private Industry Councils (PICs) into Boards and others have created brand new entities, comprised of an even wider cross-section of community stakeholders. Regardless of the way in which they are formed, Workforce Boards must have majority private-sector representation in order to ensure that the voices of local employers—as key customers of the system and as primary resources into current and future skill needs—inform policy-setting and decision-making.

The Workforce Investment Act outlines nine key functions that Workforce Boards should carry out: 1) Designing, certifying, and overseeing Career Center operators; 2) Identifying eligible training providers and making recommendations to the State; 3) Developing and entering into memoranda of understanding with Career Center partners; 4) Developing a budget; 5) Establishing local performance measures; 6) Program oversight and assisting in the development of a statewide employment statistics system; 7) Coordinating employer linkages with workforce development activities and promoting the participation of private employers in the statewide workforce investment system; 8) Establishing a “youth council” which operates as a subgroup within each Board and is responsible for the selection and oversight of local youth programs; and 9) Provision of grants for youth activities.

Individual Training Accounts

An Individual Training Account (ITA) is an account established by a One-Stop operator on behalf of an eligible individual. ITAs are funded with adult and dislocated worker funds authorized under Title I of the Act. Individuals may use ITAs in exchange for training services for skills in demand occupations (as defined by the local Workforce Board), from an approved list of training providers. ITAs place training in the hand of the customer. Rather than being directed to a training provider by an agency, the customer is able to select high quality training on his/her own.

Because the Act mandates that all training services (except on-the-job and customized training) be provided through the use of ITAs, a local One-Stop operator's policy and management of ITAs plays a very important role in determining the level of quality in a local workforce system. In fact, the Act requires that a prospective operator's ITA policy and management process must be both in written form and operational prior to being granted certification by a Workforce Board.



CERTIFICATION

Although the Workforce Investment Act gives local Workforce Investment Boards the responsibility for ensuring a comprehensive, high quality One-Stop service delivery system in their workforce area, how “high quality” is defined will be different in each workforce area depending on the characteristics of the local economy, the labor market, and the specific needs of customers in the community. However, since employers are among our primary customers, each local workforce investment system must be developed with greater participation and input from local employers and business leaders. The idea is that our local systems can best achieve high quality by paralleling the success of so many businesses in improving quality and productivity. By harnessing the expertise and assistance of local employers, we can implement quality assurance strategies based on best practices from the private sector.

One quality assurance strategy that has been used successfully in the private sector, and on which the model in this Guidebook is based, is certification. In its simplest form, certification is a process through which an oversight body or authority determines that some person, thing, or organization has met a set of standards which have been previously defined by that oversight body as constituting a minimum level of quality.

For example, you most likely know someone who is a CPA, a “certified public accountant.” A CPA designation means that the person has been certified, or guaranteed, by a State examining board as having met the requirement of State law for operating a public accounting practice. Or, perhaps you are a vegetarian and will eat only certified organic foods, foods grown according to a set of acceptable standards for the minimal or non-use of chemical pesticides and biological agents; or, maybe you take your car to a certified mechanic. There are, in fact, countless examples of the certification of products, services and, as this Guidebook describes, entire organizations and systems and their work processes, which also includes their products and services.

Essentially, certification is a guarantee of quality. And if certification is taken seriously, it is not just about a one-time designation; it is an ongoing process which keeps all parties involved on their toes and at the top of their game. The certification—and recertification—process itself serves as an opportunity to continually reexamine and revise the set of standards which constitute quality in a given product, service, field, or industry in order to guarantee that only people and organizations of the highest caliber are involved in making a product, providing a service, or representing and leading a field or industry.



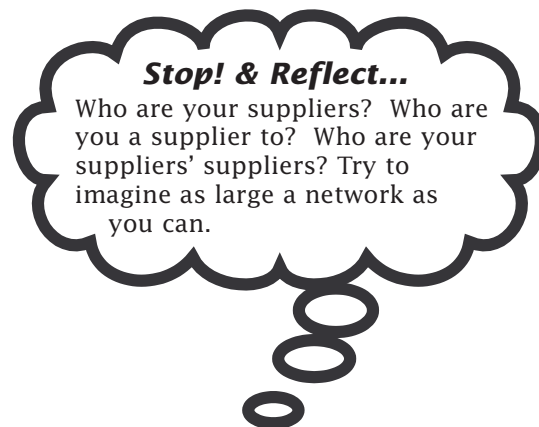
S U P P L I E R C E R T I F I C A T I O N

Frequently, the term “supplier” is used in conjunction with certification, and in fact the quality assurance model in Section Four is based on the practice of supplier certification. A “supplier” is a person, work unit or organization that provides products or services to another person, unit or organization in support of their business.

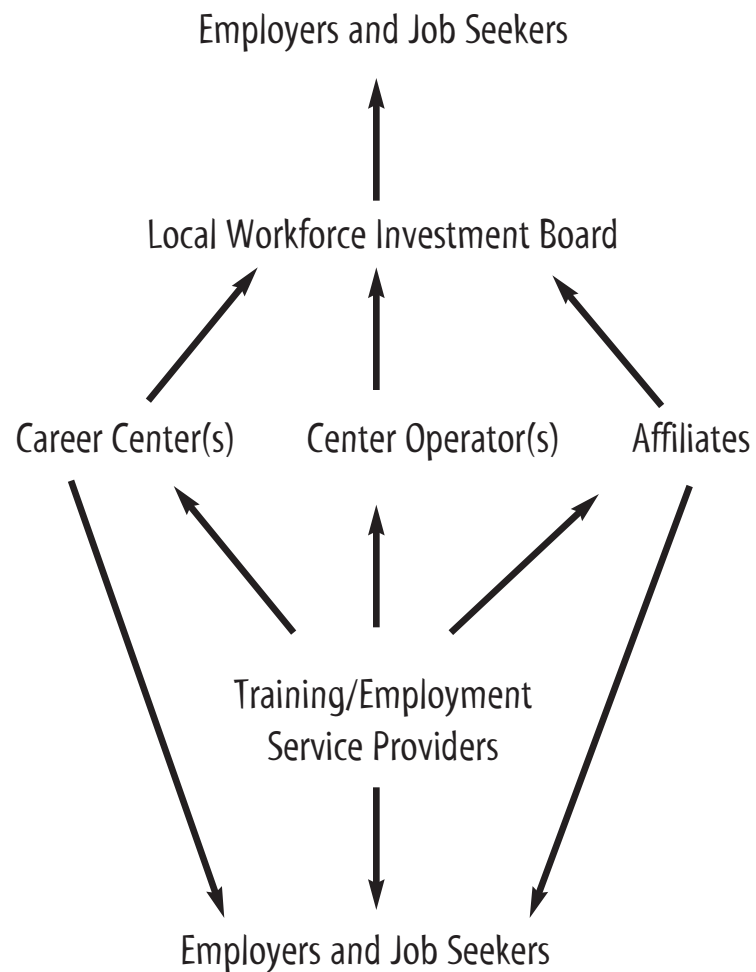
The practice of supplier certification grew out of the common industrial practice by which a large manufacturer—such as an automobile company—requires each of its suppliers—such as small and mid-sized parts manufacturers—to meet a set of explicitly defined performance and quality standards in order to continue to remain a supplier to the large firm. Certifying suppliers is critical to the large manufacturer’s ability to control and guarantee quality control in the process of manufacturing, marketing, and delivering a highly complex product. Indeed, in order to ensure their own competitiveness, the small manufacturers might in turn demand certain requirements of their own suppliers and distributors, warehouses or transportation contractors.

The concept of supplier certification has evolved significantly over the past few decades and is now used in many fields and industries outside of manufacturing. Decision makers in both private and public sectors have learned that in order to produce top quality goods and services in a complex system, all of the “system stakeholders” must take an active role in defining and then demonstrating their commitment to a shared vision and a mutually agreed-upon standard of quality. For example, in your local workforce development system, the Workforce Board can use a “supplier certification process” to ensure that only those organizations able to meet your locally-defined standards for quality—those organizations which can demonstrate commitment to your vision—are allowed to enter and operate in your system. Only in this way can the Board guarantee a consistently high level of services to its job-seeker and employer customers.

In a local workforce development system supplier relationships are complex. A One-Stop Career Center operator could be considered a supplier to the Workforce Board; but career centers are also be suppliers of services to local employers and job seekers. Career center “affiliates” may be suppliers to both the career center operator and the Workforce Board. Schools, colleges, community-based organizations and other training and employment service providers may be suppliers to career centers, affiliates, and local job seekers and employers. The figure on the following page shows how the complicated, inter-related workforce investment system supplier network might look.



AN EXAMPLE OF A LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEM SUPPLIER NETWORK



The Workforce Investment Act grants local Workforce Boards the responsibility to oversee this entire system and see that its various parts provide high quality services to customers. Therefore, since quality assurance implies measuring quality in the system as a whole, operators, affiliates, and service providers should expect Workforce Boards to provide the oversight and ongoing support they need in order to meet performance expectations and to grow and improve. In other words, quality assurance should be a "two-way street" of communication, articulation and balances between the Board and the agencies it oversees.

A well-thought out certification process can facilitate that two-way street and enable you to also satisfy the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act. It can serve as both a planning and an implementation tool, promoting healthy inter-agency relationships and overall system quality by providing a solid framework to:

1. *Establish minimum organizational and performance standards which will be used to evaluate the capability of organizations applying for entry into the system.*
2. *Use these same standards as a basis for evaluating the performance of certified suppliers, their services and products, and other elements of your system.*
3. *Encourage and promote a structured, continuous improvement methodology in which the supplier uses the established standards as a basis for self-assessment, and both the contractor and the supplier use evaluation and self-assessment results to improve products and services.*

The quality assurance model described in Section Four provides a general framework for doing these very things, and doing them with high quality, through a systems approach.

Section Two: The Baldrige Framework

WHY USE BALDRIGE?

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was established in 1987 to recognize companies which demonstrate the highest possible level of excellence in improvement of their overall performance and capabilities. It is awarded in three categories: manufacturing, small business, and service (*the Award has also recently been adapted for health care and education*). Only a handful of companies actually win the Award each year. But so many companies have realized successful results from engaging in the Award's rigorous application process that now organizations of all kinds—both private- and public-sector, including numerous federal, state and local entities—use it as a basis for quality assurance and continuous improvement efforts.

Although there are other quality assurance frameworks out there, the Baldrige framework is recommended for workforce investment stakeholders because:

1. *It grew up in the private-sector.* It will be understood by both Workforce Board members and employer customers.
2. *It is widely known and accepted, not just in the private-sector, but in the non-profit and public sectors as well.* DOL's **Simply Better!** series of tools and guidebooks are all based on the Baldrige framework, as is the Enterprise's Continuous Improvement System.
3. *It is not prescriptive.* It does not require the use of any one continuous improvement or change management tool or product. The only requirement is a deep desire and commitment to change for the better.
4. *It is universal.* The Baldrige framework creates a common language and a common standard for quality, while enabling each organization within a highly complex system to adapt the Award's main principles to its unique culture.

The core of the Baldrige Award framework is an intensive assessment of an organization's operational strengths and weaknesses. The goal of the assessment is to identify opportunities for continuous improvement which will yield positive business results.



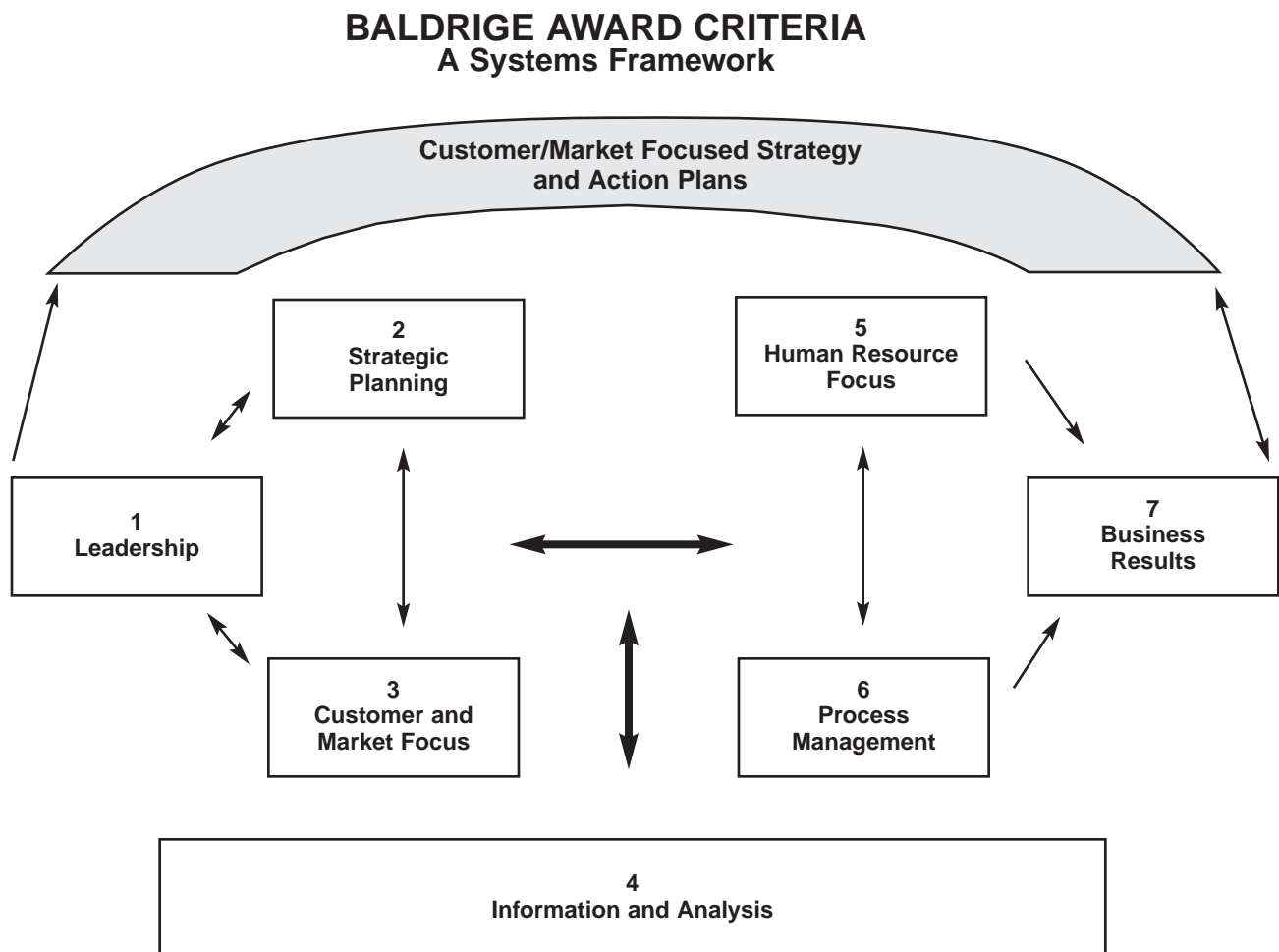
Stop! & Reflect...

When was the last time you did an organizational assessment? What were the results?

THE SEVEN BALDRIGE ASSESSMENT CATEGORIES

The Baldrige examines seven main categories of organizational behavior: **Leadership**, **Strategic Planning**, **Customer and Market Focus**, **Information and Analysis**, **Human Resource Focus**, **Process Management**, and **Business Results**. Under each category are items and questions that further define what constitutes excellence in that category. Each of the questions is directed toward a specific aspect of an organization's operations, yet is phrased in such a way that the "answer" can only come from within the organization itself through a thorough self-examination or self-assessment.

The chart below shows how the seven categories are integrated in a systems framework for organizational improvement.



APPLYING THE BALDRIDGE CATEGORIES TO WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

In order to fully adapt the Baldrige criteria to the workforce investment arena, some translation is necessary. Let's look briefly at the seven categories and some examples of how they could be defined for a local workforce investment system.

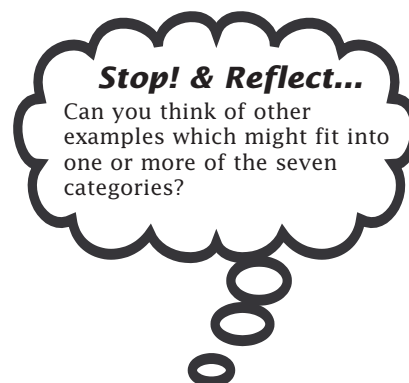
Category 5 - Human Resource Focus

Baldrige Category	Application in Workforce Investment
<p>Category 1 - Leadership <i>The Leadership Category examines how the organization's senior leaders address values, performance expectations, a focus on customers and other stakeholders, empowerment, innovation, learning, and organizational directions. Included is a look at how the organization addresses its responsibilities to the public and supports its key communities.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require leaders from Workforce Boards, career center operators, and service providers to demonstrate commitment to continuous improvement in day-to-day business decisions. • Position the Workforce Board as a leader in the local community by articulating short- and long-term goals for the workforce investment system, and linking those goals to the broader economic and political goals of the community. • Educate the community about the new workforce investment system and the various models of managing One-Stop career centers; ensure that a wide range of community representatives participate in decision-making about which model will be implemented.
<p>Category 2 - Strategic Planning <i>The Strategic Planning Category examines the organization's process of developing strategic objectives, as well as creating action plans and related human resource plans to support organizational direction. Also examined is the deployment of those plans, and how performance is tracked.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all required programs and partners are involved in the strategy development process, are represented on the Board, and are present in full service career centers. • Understand expectations of job-seekers, employers, elected officials, and Workforce Board members; determine how each set of expectations will be measured and reported back to stakeholders. • Utilize business plans as a condition for operators and affiliates to become certified, and as strategic planning documents which enables the Workforce Board to fully enrich the local system based on partner input.
<p>Category 3 - Customer and Market Focus <i>The Customer and Market Focus Category examines how the organization determines customer/market requirements, expectations, and preferences. Also examined is how the organization builds relationships with customers and determines their satisfaction.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold focus groups and public hearings to attain customer input prior to planning services, products, and how service delivery will be coordinated and managed. • Develop a single point of contact for both employers and job-seekers. • Require the use of marketing and customer satisfaction data (surveys, etc.) to justify all services and products and to support continuous improvement.
<p>Category 4 - Information and Analysis <i>The Information and Analysis Category examines the performance measurement system and how the organization analyzes performance data and information.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require operators to demonstrate how the use of information and information technologies will support and enhance both customer service and staff effectiveness. • Conduct a situational audit of your local system to identify areas of opportunity for developing new or improved services and products. • Train all system stakeholders in how to analyze the impact of changes in quality and customer satisfaction on financial performance.

<p>Category 5 - Human Resource Focus <i>The Human Resource Focus Category examines how the organization enables employees to develop and utilize their full potential in alignment with the organization's objectives. Also examined are the organization's efforts to build and maintain a work environment and an employee support climate conducive to performance excellence, full participation, and personal and organizational growth.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set guidelines for ongoing capacity building to ensure that staff at all levels of the system are trained and expert in providing services in a customer-oriented enterprise. • Identify and conduct necessary training sessions for top managers, line staff, and supplier staff. • Ensure that all your information systems and work processes promote collaboration and information sharing across multiple agencies, partners, and work units. Modify performance reviews and bonus systems to provide incentives for employee excellence.
<p>Category 6 - Process Management <i>The Process Management Category examines the key aspects of process management, including customer-focused design of products and service delivery, as well as support, supplier and partnering processes involving all work units. Also examined are how key processes are designed, implemented, managed, and improved to achieve better performance.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a supplier certification process driven by a Baldrige-based system of performance measures and quality assurance standards. • Identify the flow of services in each full service and affiliate career center; determine how Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and eligible service provider /consumer report information will be managed within that flow. • Determine how poor performance of an operator, career center partner, or service provider will be handled.
<p>Category 7 - Business Results <i>The Business Results Category examines the organization's performance and improvement in key business areas - customer satisfaction, financial and marketplace performance, product and service performance, human resource results, supplier and partner results, and operational performance. Also examined are performance levels relative to competitors, and other organizations within the system providing similar services.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link the renewal of operator or training provider certification and the receipt of incentive funds to meeting specifically defined performance standards. • Define business results in terms of improved service quality to an increasing number of customers, both per career center and throughout the entire system; avoid relying solely on narrow measures such as placement rates. • Measure support systems successes (such as for information and human resource systems), and include them in overall business results analysis to ensure integrity of analysis and reporting.

Baldrige Criteria and Supplier Certification

As was mentioned previously, under each of the seven Baldrige categories are items and questions which probe deeper into the general concept of that category. Item 6.3, *Supplier and Partnering Processes*, for example, is part of Category 6—Process Management—and specifically addresses how an organization designs, implements, operates, and improves relationships with its suppliers and partners. It also addresses supplier and partner performance management and improvement, and so is particularly relevant for a supplier certification process.



Here is what Item 6.3 asks:

6.3 Supplier and Partnering Processes

Describe how your organization manages its key supplier and/or partnering interactions and processes. Within your response, include answers to the following questions:

1. *What key products/services do you purchase from suppliers and/or partners?*
2. *How do you incorporate performance requirements into supplier and/or partner process management? What key performance requirements must your suppliers and/or partners meet to fulfill your overall requirements?*
3. *How do you ensure that your performance requirements are met? How do you provide timely and actionable feedback to suppliers and/or partners? Include the key performance measures and/or indicators and any targets you use for supplier and/or partner assessment.*
4. *How do you minimize overall costs associated with process and/or performance reviews?*
5. *How do you provide technical assistance and/or incentives to suppliers and/or partners to help them improve their overall performance and to improve their abilities to contribute to your organization's and the system's current and longer-term performance?*
6. *How do you improve your supplier and/or partner processes, including your role as supportive customer/partner, to keep current with your organization's and the system's strategic needs and directions? How are improvements shared throughout your organization and the system?*

As you can see, Item 6.3 stresses the importance of creating an organizational rationale for establishing formal business relationships with both suppliers and partners. That rationale should be tied explicitly back to performance results. In other words, you shouldn't contract with a supplier or form a partnership unless you have clearly defined how the supplier or partner will help¹¹ your organization to meet your performance goals. You should also make sure that the prospective supplier or partner clearly defines how it will help you meet your goals. This is a subtle, but important point: *You may see the positive gains to be had from the relationship, but the supplier or partner must also be able to articulate and demonstrate an understanding of the mutual benefits to the relationship.*

Below are some general characteristics of certified suppliers which you can use as guidelines to determine if your suppliers and partners really understand the premise of your business relationships, i.e., whether they are truly focused on quality. These characteristics should be self-evident in all interactions and transactions that take place between you and your suppliers or partners. Item 6.3 helps you to create the internal infrastructure and awareness to be able to build productive relationships with organizations that have these characteristics.

Characteristics of a Certified Supplier

The certified supplier has a management philosophy that looks to the future.

The certified supplier shares your (and your organization's) goals and commitments.

The certified supplier promotes a long-term business relationship with you and your organization.

The certified supplier engenders trust throughout your organization.

In creating a rationale for supplier and partner relationships, Baldrige Item 6.3 also requests a description of the key performance factors that are used in evaluating suppliers and partners. For the evaluation of certified suppliers, there are five core factors: *Quality, Delivery, Technical Support, Management Attitude, and Cost*. These core factors underscore the most crucial aspect of Item 6.3: *that improvements in your supplier and partnering relationships will result in improved services to customers and better performance throughout your entire workforce development system.*

Results, results, results! If you and your organization fully engage in the Baldrige framework, then all paths should lead you to a greater understanding of how each area of your operation affects your performance results.

The following sources provide more detailed information on the Baldrige framework: <http://www.quality.nist.gov>; <http://www.asq.org/abtquality/awards/baldrige.html>; and the *Enterprise Guide to the Workforce Investment Act* and the *Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence* (The Enterprise, 1999).

Stop! & Reflect...

Think back to the example of a supplier network in Section One (Figure 1). Do your suppliers have these characteristics?

Section Three: Examples of Existing Public-Sector Quality Assurance Programs

This section provides a review of pioneering quality assurance programs that have been developed in the public- and non-profit sectors, particularly in workforce development systems. Some are close adaptations of the Baldrige framework. Certification of career centers is highlighted because this is the area in which most certification has occurred within One-Stop systems and from where we can draw the most developed “living” examples. Certification of career center affiliates and training and service providers is only beginning to emerge and will likely become more and more prevalent over the next two to five years.

CERTIFYING CAREER CENTERS

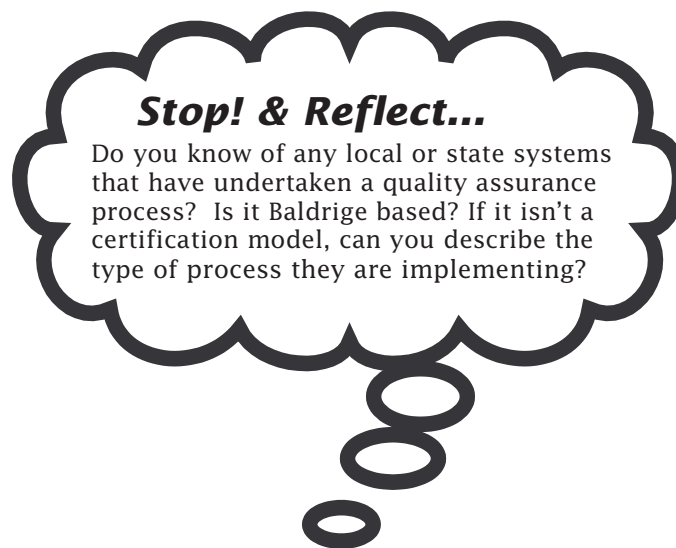
As Section One outlined, certification is the process tool identified in the Workforce Investment Act for setting service and performance expectations, establishing the career centers, and then tracking the performance of centers against those service and performance expectations. Under the Act, an agency or consortium will not be funded to operate a career center without first being certified or “chartered” by a local Workforce Investment Board.

To be granted certification means that the Workforce Board is satisfied that the prospective operator will deliver high quality service to customers. In each local system, the Workforce Board determines how many centers to certify within its region based on local labor market needs and funding availability. It also identifies how many sites should be full-service and how many should be affiliated network sites.

Several career center certification processes have been established around the country at both the local and state levels. Included here are overviews of those which have been established at the local level in Louisville, Boston, and a three-SDA region in the state of Washington, and at the state level in North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. Each example includes a brief description of some of the common elements which should be present in any certification process, and which you will find in the model outlined in Section Four. These common elements are: Certifying Responsibility, Development of Standards, Key Steps in the Certification Process, and Re-Certification Process.

A few, but not all, of the examples also include Ongoing Oversight and Continuous Improvement. Unfortunately, career center management after operators have become certified does not always receive an adequate amount of attention in many One-Stop systems. This is often because of the newness of the career centers and because Workforce Boards and career center operators often lack a full understanding of the ways in which continuous improvement tools and methods can enhance their management capabilities and add value to the overall functioning of the system. But as you have learned from Sections One and Two, and as you will see in the model in Section Four, certification is not a one-time event; it is an ongoing relationship between system stakeholders premised on the idea that the relationship will evolve and grow according to mutually accepted goals and expectations.

Whether or not the local- and state-level systems described here have fully developed a continuous improvement component, they each offer a range of practices and policies which may be of value to you as you develop your own certification process based on the model in Section Four. As some of the first areas to try managing their One-Stop systems through certification, many of their practices are not as time-tested as, say, those of the private-sector. But as closer “kindred spirits” to your own enterprise, they provide a glimpse at what your own system may soon look like.



Louisville, Kentucky

Certifying Responsibility

The Louisville/Jefferson County and North Central Kentucky Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) developed and oversee a Baldrige-based chartering process. A committee of the Louisville/Jefferson County WIB is responsible for reviewing and refining chartering criteria on an annual basis. Career Resources, Inc., a non-profit corporation, manages Louisville's One-Stop Career Centers and its centers are chartered by the WIB.

Development of Standards

The WIB, Career Resources, Inc., and the Career Centers have jointly developed a system of Baldrige-based standards for the entire Career Center system. Within this framework, each Career Center is given substantial freedom to develop a customized strategy for meeting the standards and measuring progress against them.

Key Steps in the Certification Process

The chartering process consists of two phases—a Provisional Phase and a Charter Phase—with specific requirements organized within the seven Baldrige categories for each phase. The Provisional Phase lasts no more than six months from a Center's opening date and allows the Center to open its doors and reach a defined threshold of activity before applying for an official charter. If a Center fails to meet the criteria of the Provisional Phase, the Center will not be granted a charter and is not authorized to use the Career Resources, Inc. name. When a Center does meet all of the Provisional Phase criteria, the Center is issued a charter and is given greater autonomy and decision-making authority. The Charter Phase lasts for a period of three years. The WIB committee reviews and refines the chartering criteria each year on a center-by-center basis.

Re-Certification Process

Six months prior to the expiration of the initial charter agreement, the WIB's committee conducts an evaluation of the Center's performance. Unless the committee determines that the Center has not achieved acceptable levels of performance, the charter will renew automatically for another twelve month period. As long as the Center continues to perform in accordance with its charter and continues to meet the criteria outlined for each phase, the charter will continue to renew perpetually for one-year terms.

Career center performance is measured and evaluated based on a system referred to as the Balanced Scorecard, which was developed and first employed in the private sector by United Parcel Service (UPS). UPS representatives provided assistance in understanding the value of the Balanced Scorecard system and developing an appropriate Scorecard for Louisville's Career Centers. The Balanced Scorecard measurement system calls for identifying, focusing on, and measuring critical success indicators from four perspectives: customer, financial, innovation and learning, and internal business. With consultation from a UPS employee and a Workforce Board member, each Career Center designs its own Scorecard to balance its goals, priorities, and achievements with those of the entire Career Center System.

If the WIB's committee determines that a Center has not achieved acceptable levels of quality performance, it will notify the Center and the Career Resources, Inc. corporate office 90 days prior to charter expiration. The Center and the Career Resources, Inc. corporate office then have the opportunity to jointly develop remedial steps and to propose a timeframe in which to return the Center to good standing. The Chartering Committee will then either approve these steps and allow sufficient time for implementation or will reject them and revoke the charter.

Boston, Massachusetts

Certifying Responsibility

The Boston Private Industry Council (PIC), Boston's Workforce Development Board, developed a local chartering process within an initial statewide One-Stop framework that encouraged competitive procurement, but which ultimately was not implemented statewide. The Boston PIC, however, continues to procure and operate its Career Centers using a competitive model.

Development of Standards

The PIC did not use a Baldrige-based approach to developing its career center standards. Within the State of Massachusetts' original competitive framework, a Governance Work Team was formed and was responsible for overseeing the development of statewide criteria for the selection of career center operators. There were three broad criteria established, each with several specific requirements which prospective operators had to meet. The three criteria were: 1) Provide a clear plan for how the center will be operated and what outcomes will be achieved; 2) Demonstrate the capacity to successfully operate a career center; and 3) Demonstrate financial competence to manage a career center.

Key Steps in the Certification Process

The Boston PIC issues a Request for Proposals which lays out its One-Stop system vision and the criteria for selecting Career Center operators. The PIC employs six primary selection criteria: service quality; feasibility; value added; scope and scale; excellence; and public good. After evaluating the proposals, the PIC selects the most promising operators and enters into a charter agreement with each. The charter outlines three main components of the agreement: 1) The PIC's and operator's common vision of what the One-Stop Career Center should be and how it will operate; 2) The parties' shared values and principles; and 3) The terms and conditions that are to help facilitate turning the vision into a reality. Charters are granted for a period of three years.

Re-Certification Process

Built into the charter agreement is a requirement that, during the second year of the charter, the PIC evaluates whether each Career Center should continue into the third year. To obtain information upon which to make such a decision, the PIC uses a review process consisting of the following components: a Career Center self-assessment, site visits, documentation of service levels and performance, and collection of customer feedback. Central to the review process is the Satisfaction and Quality Information System (SQIS). The SQIS was created by the PIC to identify and track performance goals and outcomes for each Boston-area career center operator. Based on its review, the PIC decides either to: 1) Renew a Center's charter unconditionally; 2) Renew a charter with conditions; or, 3) If a Center is failing to meet the charter's requirements or does not cooperate with the PIC's evaluation, deny renewal.

WorkSource Alliance, Washington

Certifying Responsibility

Three service delivery areas (SDAs) in Western Washington State, known together as the WorkSource Alliance, have developed a Baldrige-based certification process for One-Stop Career Centers and their Affiliate sites. The certification process has been offered to all local Workforce Development Councils (Workforce Boards) in the state as the recommended tool for the Councils to use when they certify local Career Centers.

Development of Standards

Quality standards are based on the seven Baldrige assessment categories. For each quality standard, an operator or affiliate must demonstrate how it expects to continue to improve the quality of its current practices and processes. If the organization is below minimum levels on certain criteria, it is expected to address how it will reach them. If it is at minimum levels, the organization is expected to address how it will exceed those levels through a continuous improvement strategy. If the organization is already exceeding minimum levels, it is expected to describe continuous improvement strategies for maintaining high levels of performance.

Key Steps in the Certification Process

There is a three-step process for becoming certified as a WorkSource operator: a Self-Evaluation; completion of an Application Process; and an On-Site Review. In Step One, the operator applying for a Career Center charter must conduct a self-assessment using a Baldrige-based self-assessment tool. In Step Two, each site completes an application package by answering questions related to criteria for each of the quality standards. Upon receipt of the application, three or four WorkSource reviewers will meet on-site with the local team (Step Three) to examine the application and interview team members.

Certification to become a designated WorkSource One-Stop is determined by the score received on the application package and the on-site review. Any entity wishing to display the WorkSource logo must be certified as having processes and products in place that meet or exceed the quality standards set by the WorkSource Alliance. Descriptions of an organization's approach to each quality standard are reviewed against: 1) *How the approach assists with improving performance and how the organization understands the link to outcome measures*; 2) *What continuous improvement strategies are in place to improve on the criteria*; and 3) *How skill standards are integrated as part of the criteria, when appropriate*.

WorkSource Career Centers are chartered for a period of two years.

Re-Certification Process

Operators and affiliates are eligible to apply for recertification between 18 and 22 months after certification. The recertification process is very similar to the initial three-step certification process, including a self-assessment, application package, and on-site review by a team of WorkSource examiners.

North Carolina

Certifying Responsibility

North Carolina's Commission on Workforce Development, the state's Workforce Investment Board, uses chartering as its statewide One-Stop implementation strategy to ensure the quality of its Career Center system, called *JobLink*. Within this statewide framework, local Workforce Investment Boards are the designated governing bodies for *JobLink*, with responsibility for issuing and overseeing Career Center charters.

Development of Standards

The State established a vision and framework in developing career center standards, based on the Baldrige framework, that all Workforce Boards are required to follow. The framework includes a vision statement for each of the seven major categories of the Baldrige Award criteria. Local Workforce Boards are charged with defining specific criteria and measurements that are consistent with the State's vision, but which are also responsive to local priorities. The locally specific criteria and measurements are then used to assess Career Center progress and to track the performance of Career Centers against the standards written into the charter.

Key Steps in the Certification Process

Any public or private workforce development entity or consortium can apply for a Career Center charter by submitting an application to the local Workforce Board. The application involves outlining a comprehensive workforce development plan to meet locally-established criteria. A Center must be fully operational at the time it applies for a charter. In order to be considered fully operational, the Center must have all required partners and services, with signed memorandums of understanding, in place. The Center must be able to deliver all core services as required by the Workforce Investment Act.

In addition, the workforce development plan must demonstrate how and when the Center will meet the four principles of the Department of Labor One-Stop Career Center initiative: *universality, service integration, accountability, and customer choice*. Charters are granted for terms of two to three years. Without a charter from the Workforce Board, an agency or consortium will not receive public funds to operate a Career Center in North Carolina, nor will it be allowed to use the State's logo that identifies a *JobLink* Career Center.

Re-Certification Process

The Workforce Boards are also responsible for assessing center performance, recertifying successful operators, and taking corrective actions with unsuccessful and unresponsive ones. Recertification criteria build on initial charter criteria and the Career Center (or satellite) must demonstrate acceptable levels of performance results measured against those in the initial certification, the Workforce Investment Act measures, customer satisfaction measures, use of self-assessment tools, continuous improvement efforts, and application for recognition through the North Carolina Performance Excellence Process. The application for recognition through the North Carolina Performance Excellence Process is a unique and important component of the entire chartering process because it requires operators to link-up with a state-based quality group and penalizes operators that don't.

Workforce Boards may revoke a charter and remove equipment purchased by the State if the Center fails to do any of the following: 1) meet performance standards for two consecutive years; 2) perform a self-assessment; 3) apply for recognition under the North Carolina Performance Excellence Process; 4) participate as agreed in memorandum of understanding; 5) annually sign the memorandum of understanding by one or more key partners; 6) gather customer satisfaction information and demonstrate a positive response to customer needs, feedback and ratings; or 7) for other reasons established in the memorandum of understanding. Charters are renewed for terms of two to three years.

Pennsylvania

Certifying Responsibility

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has implemented a statewide chartering framework to ensure the quality of its *CareerLink* Career Centers. However, whereas in Louisville, Boston and North Carolina charters are granted by a local level Workforce Board, in Pennsylvania the state Human Resource Investment Council (HRIC) is responsible for chartering Career Centers. *(Note: As a result of the 1998 Workforce Investment Act, the chartering authority in Pennsylvania will transfer to local Workforce Boards beginning in January 2000.)*

Development of Standards

A state-local workgroup has identified chartering standards and measures that could be implemented statewide without preference to one service delivery provider over another. The resulting criteria, which are based on the Baldrige Award criteria, have been tied to the functions and characteristics required for success at a *CareerLink* Center, not to funding source requirements.

The concept of continuous quality improvement (CQI) was endorsed by the state-local workgroup at the outset and many of the measures reflect the basic CQI principles of self-assessment, systemic planning, measurement, and ongoing feedback. In addition, the workgroup readily adopted as an overall framework the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence because of its focus on three facets of operational success: *achieving business results, satisfying customers and improving continuously*. Accordingly, the criteria that were proposed to and adopted by the HRIC are organized into the seven major Baldrige categories.

Key Steps in the Certification Process

There are three different levels of chartering criteria in Pennsylvania. Charters are awarded by the HRIC on a site-by-site basis at one of these three levels. *Level One* represents the basic set of standards and criteria that must be met to gain a charter before a Center can officially open its doors for business. As management and operational processes demonstrate greater scope and efficacy, Center operators may apply for and be awarded the higher designations of *Level Two* and *Level Three*.

To gain designation as a *CareerLink* Center, a local entity must prepare and submit to the HRIC a business plan that demonstrates the center's ability to deliver excellent services and addresses the chartering criteria which are organized within the Baldrige categories. The business plans, in combination with local input and site visits, form the basis for a charter award.

Ongoing Oversight and Continuous Improvement

Improvement in the Centers' capacities over time is expected. Technical assistance is provided by a team of state *CareerLink* representatives to help local Center operators understand the *CareerLink* framework and to identify actions that need to be taken to meet the chartering criteria at each level. The HRIC has also recognized the value that an incentives structure can play in a statewide system and is currently exploring opportunities to reward Centers that move up to higher levels of competency.

Re-Certification Process

Charters are granted for a two-year period, at the end of which Center operators are re-evaluated to determine whether they will be re-chartered. Advancement across the three charter levels is not a function of time; Centers earn higher designations only through voluntarily demonstrating to the HRIC evidence of increasing customer service levels, and existence of management and operational systems that support customer-focused service delivery.

TWO OTHER QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAMS

The Workforce Excellence Network/Enterprise

In January 2000, The Enterprise and other stand-alone DOL quality initiatives changed course, and are now the **Workforce Excellence Network**. The Network and the new Workforce Excellence Board serve as the focus of quality and continuous improvement efforts to transform our new workforce investment system into one that is high-performing and customer-focused. As the Workforce Excellence Network establishes its products and programming, many of the most successful aspects of the past initiatives are likely to be incorporated in the new entity.

One program worth reviewing is the Enterprise model for quality and continuous improvement. Though the model used in the new Workforce Excellence Network will be different, the underlying spirit of promoting, supporting and validating quality and improvement in our system will remain unchanged.

The Enterprise has been a network of workforce development organizations emphasizing high quality, customer-focused services, using process management techniques adapted from the private sector. Its purpose was to promote and enhance the quality of all workforce development services and to give recognition for the quality that exists in the system. Over 200 local workforce development entities are currently members of the Enterprise.

The network's board of directors was the Enterprise Council, a 28-member national board created by local, state and federal workforce development partners. One of its primary roles was to establish standards for Enterprise membership which currently are modeled on the Baldrige Award.

The Enterprise utilized its *Continuous Improvement System* which is based on a tiered approach to quality and offered four levels of organizational membership:

- 1) *The Quality Entry Point - Enterprise Pioneer*
- 2) *Continuous Improvement Self-Assessment - Advanced Pioneer*
- 3) *Performance and Continuous Improvement - Enterprise Member*
- 4) *Best in Class - Enterprise National Award*

Enterprise Membership involved a three-year membership cycle during which members committed to pursuing performance excellence goals and continuous improvement strategies. During the second year of membership, members conducted a self-assessment and develop a quality action plan to guide continued progress. During the third year of membership, members applied for recertification.

The Enterprise model was unique in defining multiple points of entry and recognizing varying levels of quality. The tiered approach can provide a sense of movement and improvement as organizations strive to reach the higher quality levels. A tiered approach may be most appropriate for a local system if there is a clear difference in the level of readiness to be certified between operators and affiliates. Also, offering multiple entry-points displays an attitude of openness and invitation toward prospective operators and service providers not already affiliated with the system, and who can demonstrate new and potentially more effective ways of operating.

CARF

The mission of the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) is to promote the quality, value, and optimal outcomes of rehabilitation services nationwide. It does this through a consultative accreditation process which concentrates on enhancing the lives of the persons served. Because many of CARF's goals are similar to those of workforce development programs, and because many rehab agencies are partners in workforce development, it is worth exploring the CARF process for ensuring high quality.

In order to achieve CARF accreditation, an organization must demonstrate a commitment to the continuous improvement of organizational quality and service excellence, including the development and use of an outcomes measurement and management system. There are many ways a service provider can develop and continuously improve its outcomes measurement and management system. However, CARF has developed and promotes the use of the following eight-step process:

1. *Conduct a service provider SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) analysis.*
2. *Select a service design and identify primary customers.*
3. *Define and prioritize quality and outcomes expectations for each key customer.*
4. *Design outcomes system to include Effectiveness, Efficiency, Aggregated Individual Service Satisfaction, and Aggregated Stakeholder Satisfaction with Services.*
5. *Obtain individual consumer satisfaction information.*
6. *Obtain satisfaction information from other stakeholders.*
7. *Obtain follow-up information with individuals once they are no longer receiving services to determine the impact that services have had on their quality of life.*
8. *Share outcomes information regularly with internal and external customers.*

The key point of the CARF process for application in a local workforce development system is the focus on defining outcomes, obtaining and collecting data on service delivery, and sharing information with customers. The CARF model is extremely customer-focused. Everything revolves around accurately defining customer needs, and then designing and delivering services and products which go beyond the customer's expectations of quality.



Stop! & Reflect...

What is the prevailing attitude toward and commitment to customers of your local system?

Section Four: A Quality Assurance Model for Workforce Investment Systems

The quality assurance model presented here is a blending of many of the examples described throughout this Guidebook. It is centered on the practice of supplier certification and is, like several of those reviewed in this Guidebook, founded on the principles underlying the Baldrige Award criteria.

This model focuses mainly on the role of the Workforce Board in the certification process for two reasons: 1) The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 grants One-Stop certification authority to local Workforce Investment Boards, and 2) Although the model is applicable to other sets of relationships within your local system, most workforce areas are still in the early stages of One-Stop implementation and so the Workforce Board-Operator relationship is the most common, current “living” example.

Before looking at the model, here are some general guidelines about the role of the Workforce Board in certification:

First, the Workforce Board must view certification of One-Stop Operators as an interactive and iterative process if it is to be more than a pro forma designation. Certification must focus on the dynamic of the people involved in the process; the people at all levels of the system who, on a daily basis, make judgements and decisions and take action based on those judgements and decisions. The certification process itself must be capable of bending and shifting with that dynamic. The process should become integrated into the culture of the system, but it must never become fossilized or stagnant; it must remain flexible.

Second, the Workforce Board must ensure that there exists an atmosphere which will support both the “letter” and the “spirit” of certification. There must be:

- *A full understanding of the certification concept and tools by Workforce Board members, operators, affiliates, and other local parties.*
- *Practical knowledge of the local and regional workforce investment environment.*
- *A board-level strategy for deployment of the certification process.*
- *A sufficient infrastructure, including a management information system, to support administration of the certification process.*

Finally, while each example in Section Three was chosen for particular strengths or approaches, none of the examples contains all of the necessary elements for a certification process to be most effective in a One-Stop environment. As was mentioned previously, the element most commonly missing is an operational commitment to continuous improvement throughout the *entire* workforce development system. *Therefore, if there is any one message which the Workforce Board must convey through its policies, it is that continuous improvement is the most vital part of any quality assurance process, and perhaps of any One-Stop system.*

THE MODEL – OVERVIEW

This model has three phases: ***Phase One - Initial Certification***; ***Phase Two - Performance Assessment/Continuous Improvement***; and ***Phase Three - Recertification***. A set of recommended steps for each phase is listed below. Discussion of the three phases and their respective steps follow.

Phase One - Initial Certification

1. Establish quality standards based on the seven Baldrige categories
2. Require self-assessment and development of business plan by One-Stop certification applicant
3. Completion of application by One-Stop certification applicant (full-service or affiliate)
4. On-site review of One-Stop applicant
5. Feedback report (from Workforce Board to applicant)
6. Certification decision
7. Technical assistance, training, support

Phase Two - Performance Assessment/Continuous Improvement

1. Reconfirm, revise and expand local One-Stop system vision and quality standards as necessary
2. Require self-assessment and revision of business plan by One-Stop operators
3. Conduct post-certification review(s) of One-Stop operators
4. Feedback report (from Workforce Board to operator)
5. Technical assistance, training, support

Phase Three - Recertification

1. Update quality standards around Baldrige categories
2. Require self-assessment and revision of business plan by recertification applicant
3. Completion of recertification application by applicant
4. Conduct on-site review of applicant
5. Feedback report
6. Recertification decision
7. Technical assistance, training, support

Before jumping into the details of the model, a precaution: *It cannot be overstated that no single model is guaranteed to result in success, nor is any one model appropriate for all systems.* The best that a model can offer is a solid starting point informed by the experiences of those who have already made a similar journey. The ultimate value of any quality assurance model is its potential for applicability and adaptability to a wide variety of circumstances and relationships.

PHASE ONE – INITIAL CERTIFICATION

The steps leading to initial certification of career center operators and their affiliates is critical to ensuring that all parties agree to performance outcomes and expectations prior to actual certification.* The implication of the steps described in Phase One is that post-certification problems are minimized—and success maximized—by taking the time to ensure that prospective operators have the right combination of qualifications, capacity, motivation, and commitment.

** Remember that “affiliates” are workforce development service providers which do not provide the full range of services normally associated with a full service career center but which are able to provide access to at least the core services, often through electronic means.*

The Workforce Investment Act designates Workforce Boards as the decision-making authority for certifying career centers. To maximize the ability of your Board to fulfill its role in overseeing the certification process, a **Review Team** should be established to carry out much of the hands-on implementation of the process. Depending upon the specific parameters of your state’s One-Stop vision, the Review Team could include staff and board members from your local Workforce Board, as well as members of your state’s Workforce Investment Board or other state agencies, as deemed appropriate.

Once the Review Team has been appointed, there are seven key steps which should be carried out in the initial certification phase in order to allow the Workforce Board to fairly evaluate applicants and eventually choose and charter the most qualified One-Stop operator(s). These steps are described below.

1. Establish quality standards based on the seven Baldrige categories

The first and most important step in the certification process is establishing quality standards, criteria and measures which you will use as a basis for measuring the growth and overall success of your local system. The explicit recommendation of this Guidebook is to use the seven Baldrige Award categories as your foundation and build up from there. Here are the seven categories again, for review: ***Leadership, Strategic Planning, Customer and Market Focus, Information and Analysis, Human Resource Development and Management, Process Management, and Business Results.***

There are several good Baldrige-based quality frameworks that can be used as a template for establishing quality standards which are applicable to the requirements of your local workforce

development system. Below is an example of how the State of North Carolina has defined its statewide career center vision for each of the seven Baldrige categories.

Leadership

Vision: North Carolina's commitment to excellence in its JobLink Career Centers will be modeled and shaped by strong public and private leadership for the system. Communities that are ready to implement successful career center systems evidence effective private- sector-led governance conducted by the area's Workforce Development Board. Equally importantly, in those communities agency leaders work collaboratively to provide active and supportive management of the new system being implemented and of the transitions required to achieve it. Workforce leaders, both public and private, play an active role in raising community awareness of the career centers and the value of their services.

Strategic Planning

Vision: Strategic planning is essential at two levels for the career centers to be effectively and successfully implemented. First, the centers are developed and managed in the context of a Workforce Development Board-established integrated plan for workforce services in the community. That plan focuses upon ensuring quality and results from the system of services, including the career centers, and is created through the active participation of all key stakeholders and staff. Second, center managers develop and use a strategic business plan for their centers that demonstrates to the WDB the strategies for achieving career center performance goals for outcomes, customer satisfaction and continuous improvement. Finally, both the community workforce plan and the career center system business plan contain clear and concrete action steps to deploy the strategies developed.

Customer, Stakeholder and Market Focus

Vision: North Carolina's JobLink Career Centers and Workforce Investment System are based upon a strong customer focus, both in terms of employers and individuals. Services are shaped and centers measured in significant part by customer feedback and articulation of needs. The state requires each center management team and WDB to be actively soliciting customer feedback and to be using it to continuously improve services. Customer satisfaction is benchmarked against that in other high quality service settings.

Information and Analysis

Vision: In order to ensure that career centers are managed effectively, are responsive to customer needs, and produce results, consistent use of meaningful information by both staff and customers is fundamental to success. Career centers and Workforce Development Boards that are ready to implement their systems have identified, acquired and organized a wide variety of national, state and local data sources capable of supporting customers in making effective choices. The centers offer locally customized, reliable information in easy to use formats. Staff at the centers is trained to both use the information tools themselves and to assist customers in doing so. Centers offer their information tools both with staff support and in self-service modes. Centers draw upon many sources for their information, including the state, and offer information providers with regular feedback that supports the continuous improvement of information products.

Human Resource Development and Management

Vision: JobLink Career Centers are high performance work organizations. The collaborating agencies invest in staff development, slash hierarchy and empower staff to make most decisions. The centers focus upon employee satisfaction just as they do upon customer satisfaction, with management ensuring that staff members have the tools and skills they need to provide excellent service to center customers. The passion for quality among staff matches that of the very best models, whether public or private. Every member of the organization has the ability and authority to meet customer needs, either directly or, where appropriate, by helping the customer to make the right connections with the expertise s/he seeks. The investment in staff development is substantial, is ongoing, and focuses both on cross-training and overall skill upgrading for center staff.

Process Management

Vision: JobLink Career Centers are high quality customer service enterprises. To ensure ongoing success, centers place a major emphasis on continuous improvement of processes. At the point of launch, centers can deliver all core services in a high quality manner and are capable of flexibly and quickly responding to customer needs. Documentation of readiness is provided through career center business plans.

Performance Results

Vision: Customers of JobLink Career Centers enter with a wide array of needs; all leave the centers with the result they need. At the time of [certification], the Workforce Development Board has defined what outcomes are expected from the centers in return for the investment of tax dollars and center management is prepared to develop baseline performance data which can be used to measure results over time. The state will use the WIA performance measures, center self-assessments, customer satisfaction levels, and application to the North Carolina Performance Excellence Process as statewide outcome expectations. Local WDBs may supplement these measures with additional measures important to the WDB. Also, as center operations progress, the performance expectations will grow over time, both in terms of productivity and quality of service.

The Appendix contains additional examples of some Baldrige-based criteria and measures. You may also wish to consult with resources such as a local or state Quality Council to assist you in developing standards and to serve as a mentor to your local Workforce Board.

Because of the impact which standards will have throughout your system, you will need to involve as many voices as possible in the process of developing them. However, you also will want to manage everyone's input in a way which allows for the most effective presentation and use of their feedback into the development of the standards.

One suggestion for managing this process is to set up a Workforce Board **Certification Committee** which could research and create an initial framework of Baldrige-based quality standards for your system (using this Guidebook as a starting point). The Certification Committee would be in charge of presenting the standards to the broader community, creating formal mechanisms for obtaining community feedback, revising the standards as appropriate based on that feedback, and then performing the Workforce Board's certification role. Workforce Board staff can provide administrative support to the committee members' research and assist them with producing and adhering to a timeline.

Once research has begun and the process is opened up to the rest of your community, there is really no way of predicting what your standards are going to look like. However, there are some basic considerations which will likely influence the development of your standards. For example:

- *Does your state's One-Stop system vision or plan provide a framework for the development of quality standards or does your local workforce area have complete autonomy?*
- *Are local employers deeply involved in the development of the standards? Are they "bought-in" to the process and being cultivated as both leaders and customers of the system?*
- *Should there be a tiered set of standards for successive phases of certification, i.e. for applicants, for initial certification (0-6 months), for the first year of certification, or for recertification?*
- *Should there be multiple levels of certification which correspond to different sets of standards? For operators? For affiliated sites?*
- *Are all of your standards easily translatable into a self-assessment tool and application package which can be distributed to and completed by prospective operators and affiliates?*
- *Will your criteria and measures enable you to adequately determine if an operator's (or supplier's) continuous improvement efforts are "real"; i.e. do they exist beyond the written application form?*
- *What system resources currently exist to support widespread acceptance and full implementation of the standards? What types of resources and technical assistance are still needed?*

2. Require a self-assessment and the development of a business plan from all One-Stop certification applicants

Self-Assessment

The self-assessment component of Phase One should be comprehensive, rooted in the quality standards you have developed, and it should enable the applicant to translate and evaluate its approach to quality along a continuum. The purpose of a self-assessment is to identify organizational (or partnership) strengths, areas in need of improvement, and priority issues to be addressed in an on-site review. The ***Simply Better! Self-Assessment System*** template is highly recommended since it is based on the Baldrige criteria and has already been adapted for use by many workforce development organizations.

The self-assessment should include at least three main components:

- *A scoring framework for the quality standards developed under each of the seven Baldrige categories.* The scoring framework should not be rigid, but should provide “ranges” for helping an Applicant to determine where its quality systems are in relation to a defined top range. For example:

0%-10% could indicate little or no evidence of a quality system.

11%-20% could indicate the early stages of a developing quality system.

21%-30% could indicate the existence of developed quality system which is ready to be deployed throughout the organization.

31%-50% could indicate a quality system which is beginning to be deployed in more than one business unit within the organization.

61%-90% could indicate a system in which effective, measurable processes are in place throughout most of the organization, but which still require further testing and refinement.

91%-100% could indicate a fully responsive quality system, with sustained excellent performance clearly linked to processes.

One option to consider is a tiered approach to assessment which would enable both prospective and certified applicants to choose the level of assessment they would like to participate in. Each level could be tied to a specific threshold of possible recognition and reward by the Workforce Board. For example, a potential One-Stop operator could be required to participate in a full self-assessment on the road to possible certification. But a One-Stop affiliate organization might choose to participate in only certain segments of the assessment and achieve informal recognition of having completed a partial self-assessment.

- *A core services and intensive services checklist.* Operators must be able to offer all core and intensive services, as defined by the Workforce Investment Act. Affiliates should be required to offer, at a minimum, all core services.
- *A detailed narrative describing the Applicant's quality system and processes in relation to the self-assessment score and the seven Baldrige categories.* The narrative should also include descriptions of the core and intensive services available and the processes used to ensure access by customers. Below is an example of a completed applicant's narrative, taken from the Pennsylvania CareerLink System:

Narrative from an Application to the Pennsylvania CareerLink System [Excerpt]

...The design of the centers and the services they provide is being driven by customer requirements, particularly those of area employers. Extensive market research, involving both small and large employers, is underway that will update and complement previously identified priorities and expectations. The partners' intent is to make the CareerLink centers a primary mechanism through which the employment and skill improvement needs of the region's employers and workers are met.

To accomplish this at the initial center, the partners are establishing an integrated service system organized around the needs of customers and not the turf of agencies and programs. The partners believe that to be successful, our centers need managers who have the authority and responsibility for ensuring the success and continuous quality improvement of the center. To that end, the partners are jointly investing in a center manager for the Regional Resource Center site.

Agency leaders are deeply committed to this partnership, as evidenced by the signed partnership agreement found in [Attachment A]. Further, the partnership is real and deep, not merely an arrangement on paper. Evidence of this is our commitment to a common customer flow and management structure in each center, as well as the extensive cost sharing investor agencies have committed to provide.

The Center's continuous improvement system will incorporate the performance standards and measurements as outlined in the application. Although the Center Manager is responsible for monitoring data collection and reporting related to Center outcome measures and customer satisfaction, all partners will take mutual ownership and accountability for meeting Center performance standards...

Business Plan

Once completed, the agency's self-assessment can form the basis of a detailed business or strategic plan describing how the prospective operator envisions sustaining and growing its career center(s). Remember that business plans, when utilized as dynamic documents, are a core component of the Baldrige framework. They are absolutely essential to successfully applying the framework within either a single organization or an entire system.

In a quality assurance process built around certification, business plans are critical because they provide insight into an organization's short- and long-range planning capabilities. The strategic use of business plans can indicate how skilled operators and service providers are at short- and long-range business planning, including tying their services and products to a revenue plan and creating effective operating budgets, calendars, staffing and physical location plans, and outreach and marketing strategies. Most importantly, business plans are central to continuous improvement. They provide not only operators but also Workforce Boards with a "living" document which forms the foundation of a dynamic relationship based on shared vision and mutual support.

In general, business plans should outline how the prospective operator's career center(s) will function and could include information on: *mission and values; strategic goals; first-year implementation goals; scale and scope of service delivery; customer markets and requirements, service strategy, and customer flow; staffing structure; supplier and partnering relationships; description of facilities; start-up strategy and timeline; and financial projections.*

Below is an outline from the business plan framework which applicants are expected to provide in application for certification from the San Diego Workforce Partnership:

San Diego Workforce Partnership Required Business Plan Components	
<u>Cover Sheet</u>	<u>Technology Plan</u>
<u>Executive Summary</u>	<u>Continuous Improvement</u>
<u>Vision</u>	<u>Employer Service Plan</u>
<u>Mission</u>	<u>Individual Customer Service Plan</u>
<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Governance Plan</u>
<u>Management Plan</u>	<u>Facilities, Location, Operations</u>
<u>Financial Plan</u>	<u>Future Vision</u>
<u>Marketing Plan</u>	

The Appendix includes a detailed example of a business plan checklist for organizations and partnerships applying for certification as a career center operator.

3. Completion of a formal application by One-Stop certification applicants

The application for certification should be based on the agency's comprehensive self-assessment, which is in turn based on the quality standards you, the Workforce Board, have developed. It should allow the applicant to easily provide a detailed response in a format which enables the Review Team to compare the applicants' responses in a standard, unbiased manner.

This model strongly encourages you to consider *requiring* the submission of the prospective operator's business plan as part of the application package. In Pennsylvania, prospective operators are not only required to submit their business plans, but to show how their specific business objectives link with the seven Baldrige categories, which form the basis of the state's One-Stop vision.

Again, it is important to view the business plan not as an administrative "hoop" which the operator must jump through in order to become certified, but as a powerful tool which enhances two-way communication between the Workforce Board and operator.

The Appendix includes a sample, generic application package, adapted from an application package created by Strumpf Associates and the WorkSource Alliance, which incorporates both business plan and self-assessment tool components.

4. On-site review of the One-Stop Operator applicants

On-site reviews are an integral part of the certification process. During the initial certification phase, an on-site review gives your Review Team an opportunity to confirm that the applicant's quality systems, as described in the application, are indeed in place and to further determine the applicant's level of readiness to be certified. The Review Team should be able to determine if staff from all of the applicant's business units are engaged in continuous improvement by their actual level of involvement in the certification process. The same can be said for the applicant's senior managers and officers. If they truly embrace a continuous improvement approach to quality, it will be evident in their day-to-day business decisions and in the data they use to report their business strategies and results during the on-site review.

It is important, however, that the on-site review be a two-way street. For the applicant, the on-site review is an opportunity to ask additional questions and to clarify definitions and levels of expected performance outcomes for certified Operators or Affiliates. In the event that certification does occur, the on-site review is, in a sense, the first "handshake" of the quality partnership. Your Workforce Board needs to ensure that members of the Review Team conducting the on-site review are appropriately trained and qualified to evaluate applicants against your locally developed quality standards.

NOTE: Although the on-site review occurs prior to filling out an applicant feedback report, it is recommended that you develop the feedback report first (Step 5, below) so that the major categories and questions created for the feedback report can be assessed on-site and considered in combination with the issues and questions raised from the applicant's self-assessment.

5. Feedback report from the Workforce Board to the applicant

The delivery of a feedback report to the certification applicant or partnership is an important step in a supplier certification model. A feedback report can take many forms, but must include feedback about:

- the application, including self-assessment and business plan;
- the on-site review; and
- the status of certification, including the applicant's overall score and the Review Team's specific recommendations for improvement to meet the criteria of the quality standards (i.e., Baldrige categories).

For example, the feedback report used by Baldrige Award examiners is simple and straightforward, but nonetheless thorough. The report includes information and feedback in the following areas:

The Scoring Summary - A synthesis of the most significant strengths and opportunities for improvement by Category helps to prioritize improvement efforts.

Individual Scoring Range - For each Category, the applicant receives a 20 percent scoring range, allowing the organization to determine its relative strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Scoring Distribution - The percentage of applicants that scored in each of the eight scoring bands provides a context for comparing scores relative to other organizations.

Comments - Actionable, detailed strengths and opportunities for improvement, specific to the organization, are provided for use in the strategic planning process.

Many Workforce Boards have found that a more detailed feedback report is necessary in order to truly reflect the information gathered from both the application and the on-site review. For example, the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC) raises questions about the applicant's self-assessment and then uses those questions as a focal point for the on-site review. Below is an excerpt from a feedback report given by the PIC to a career center operator.

Boston Private Industry Council Feedback Report (Excerpt)

Self-Assessment

Career Centers were asked to complete a written Self-Assessment in which they addressed the following questions: [omitted]

The response of The Center raised questions for the PIC in three significant domains: 1. For whom was The Center completing Customer Action Plans and for what proportion of these customers did The Center think it had follow-up responsibility?; 2. How were the topics for the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process improvement teams selected?; and 3. What was the nature of services to employers and what was the plan for the build-out of fee-based services to both job seekers and employers?

Site Visit

The site visit conducted by PIC staff provided the opportunity to address these questions. PIC staff visited The Center on 1/13 and 1/14. The focus of the first day of the site visit was a review of the self-assessment and the study of customer service systems, specifically a review of job seeker and employer flow charts. The second day consisted of a review of the information technology and financial systems. A request was made by the PIC that those staff closest to the processes under review serve as presenters. Thus, the review of self-assessment was a management level exercise...

Conclusions

The Center is building an organization characterized by sound business practices, clear problem solving methods and strategic systems development based on the principles and practices of continuous quality improvement and guided by a governance board, management team, and staff committed to the career center mission and vision.

The **strengths** of the organization are as follows:

1. Leadership: The executive directors of the partners are actively and visibly involved in guiding and supporting the staff of The Center and providing the resources needed to start and maintain a high quality, customer focused operation...
2. Systems: The Center has processes in place which are consistent with its business plan...
3. Problem Solving: Based on the principles of CQI, The Center uses the study of processes and the gathering of data to make decisions about changing processes which are not meeting the needs and expectations of its job seeking and employer customers.

Opportunities for improvement

1. Documenting Labor Exchange: Job seeker customer satisfaction data, anecdotal information and observation indicate that customers are generally happy with the level and content of the services. Nonetheless, the quality and quantity of this data and the outcomes reported to date raise questions regarding tracking, follow-up, and labor exchange systems...
2. Customer Responsibility: ...More specific to The Center is the issue of developing systems to direct job seeker customers to seek additional assistance if their job seeking strategy is not working. The self-directed customer flow is under study...
3. Marketing to Employers: ...The Center's self-assessment identifies a number of on-line or technologically mediated marketing activities for the coming year. The Center should augment these efforts with activities designed to build name recognition and to identify employer market niches for aggressive outreach and recruitment...

A sample feedback report template is included in the Appendix.

6. Certification decision

The decision about whether or not to certify an Applicant as a career center Operator should be made carefully. The self-assessment, application, and on-site review results must all be factored in and weighed against the established quality standards framework, as well as the Workforce Board's overall vision for the One-Stop system.

Another important consideration is whether or not you will provide *different levels of certification* as entry-points into the system. The Enterprise and the State of Pennsylvania both have set up a continuum of certification options in order to encourage a wide range of organizations to apply, especially those who do not feel confident they can meet the Board's highest quality standards. If you are going to use multiple certification levels, you will need to define each threshold according to the ascending levels of your quality standards.

For example, if an organization meets criteria 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D', then full certification would be granted with recognition of *excellence* (Level III). If only 'A', 'B', and 'C' are met, then full certification would be granted with recognition of meeting *minimum standards* (Level II). If only 'A' and 'B' are met, then *provisional certification* would be granted on condition that criteria 'C' be met within a defined timeframe (Level I). Or, if only 'A' or none of the criteria are met, the organization would remain in *Applicant status* (Level 0). Remember that this is strictly for purposes of illustration; there are numerous ways to define multiple levels of quality and certification, should you choose to do so.

Below are the certification criteria and measures being used by the State of Pennsylvania, organized according to the three possible levels at which an operator can be certified.

Pennsylvania Certification Criteria and Measures

Criteria	Measures		
	Level I	Level II	Level III
I. LEADERSHIP			
1) Clear sense of mission 2) Agency leadership 3) Community leader commitment 4) Identifiable management structure	1) Written mission statement displayed and endorsed by partners 2) Signed partnership agreement 3) Advisory body of key community leaders 4) Defined management structure, organizational chart	1) Employees know and understand mission 2) Increased level of commitment by agency partners and/or increased number of partners 3) Tangible evidence of community leader commitment 4) Evidence of functional integration (e.g., joint venture relationship)	1) Community understands the mission 2) Partners reflect the workforce development community 3) Extraordinary evidence of community leader commitment (e.g., diversification of funds) 4) Leadership support of extensive functional integration is evident
II. STRATEGIC PLANNING			
1) Strategic plan	1) Business plan has been developed	1) Three-year strategic plan has been developed	1) Decisions are made based on strategic plan
III. CUSTOMER AND MARKET FOCUS			
1) Internal and external customer satisfaction measurement 2) Widely and freely shared customer satisfaction 3) Customer satisfaction with vendors/suppliers	1) Satisfaction information is collected from internal and external customers 2) Process for sharing customer satisfaction results internally and externally 3) Information on satisfaction with vendors/suppliers is collected to support customer (employer and individual) choice	1) Customer satisfaction information is used to continuously improve 2) Customer satisfaction results are shared in multiple mediums 3) Information on satisfaction with vendors/suppliers is used to improve referrals to and performance of vendors/suppliers	1) Customer satisfaction information drives change 2) Customer satisfaction information is analyzed over time 3) Demonstrated improvement in customer satisfaction with vendors/suppliers
IV. INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS			
1) Functional Resource Center 2) Management information system (MIS)	1) Resource Center offers: information in multiple mediums; self-service; Internet access; and trained staff 2) Strategy for meeting state and local MIS needs (management and reporting needs)	1) Resource Center has comprehensive current local information 2) MIS feeds state and local systems and is capable of producing customized reports for the local workforce development community	1) Service offerings are linked to continuous improvement efforts 2) Information is used for decision making

Pennsylvania Certification Criteria and Measures

Criteria	Measures		
	Level I	Level II	Level III
V. HUMAN RESOURCE FOCUS			
1) Staff competencies 2) Employee friendly environment 3) Team building 4) Rewards and recognition	1) Competency assessment needed; demonstration of commitment to training (dedicated training time and budget) 2) Effective labor relations structure 3) Cross-training of staff 4) Plan for employee rewards and recognition	1) Funded employee career development plans 2) Process for measuring employee satisfaction 3) Cross functional work teams 4) Evidence that employee rewards and recognition are granted	1) Significant on-going investment in staff training 2) Employee feedback used for continuous improvement 3) Staff empowerment (e.g., decision making is de-layered, staff authorized to make decisions) 4) Rewards and recognition are tied to external quality systems
VI. PROCESS MANAGEMENT			
1) Policies and procedures 2) Accessible services and resources based on customer choice 3) Service integration 4) Service Recovery	1) Evidence of staff involvement in developing policies and procedures 2) Basic customer flow is documented; ADA compliance; available parking and public transportation; effective signage; safe environment 3) Core service look and feel integrated 4) Strategy for recovery process	1) Integrated policies and policies; established process for changing policies and procedures 2) Feedback mechanism to improve customer flow and access 3) Evidence of service integration 4) Staff has authority and tools to address issues/problems	1) Process to make changes is functional (e.g., policies and procedures have been changed) 2) Feedback mechanism is generating change 3) Evidence of extensive integration 4) Recovery is part of routine business
VII. BUSINESS RESULTS			
1) Customer outcomes 2) Sustainability 3) Market presence 4) Customer satisfaction	1) Customer outcomes baseline established based on center performance measures 2) Process for considering cost and revenue 3) Market presence baseline established 4) Established customer satisfaction baseline (tied to markets)	1) Improvement in customer outcomes 2) Financial strategy for Center sustainability exists 3) Market niche identification 4) Improvement in customer satisfaction	1) Maximize and sustain customer outcomes 2) Implementation of financial strategy 3) Community-wide recognition of Center as a valuable resource 4) Maximize and compare to best in class enterprises

Once the certification decision has been made, you may want to consider dividing the actual drawing up a certification agreement into two stages. In stage one, a one-or two-page document is created which briefly describes the development of the contractor-supplier partnership to date and broadly outlines the goals of the partnership. This is called a *commitment agreement*. Once consensus on the commitment agreement is achieved and the agreement is signed by senior leaders from both the Workforce Board and the operator (and partners, if applicable), a *full quality*

agreement is created. The full quality agreement is a detailed description of the goals, objectives, and measures of quality that the supplier is expected to meet, as well as formal protocol for communications about the agreement between the contractor and the supplier. This full quality agreement can also be called a *charter* to operate a One-Stop Career Center.

7. Technical assistance, training, support

Most quality assurance models, whether private, non-profit, or public-sector, all heavily emphasize the role that technical assistance, training, and ongoing support contribute to an organization's implementation of effective continuous improvement systems and processes. The important point to remember in designing a certification process is that it is the Workforce Board's responsibility to identify Operators' technical assistance, training, and support needs related to quality assurance in your local One-Stop system, and to take the lead in coordinating local, state, or regional resources in response to those needs.

Remaining agile and responsive to Operators' needs should be a formal and *normal* day-to-day function of the Workforce Board. There are many ways to achieve this, such as through:

- *Dedicated, full-time staff*
- A small working group of Board members, operator, affiliate and service provider representatives
- Coordinating training interventions for common capacity building needs across multiple operators and/or service providers
- Coordinating training interventions for capacity building needs unique to individual operators and/or training providers
- Information technology (interactive operator web site, discussion lists/chat rooms, fax-on-demand documents, etc.)
- Dedicated toll-free phone lines for operators to communicate with local and state workforce development and employment agencies

PHASE TWO - PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Phase Two begins as soon as a certification decision has been made. The Workforce Board and its One-Stop Operators must now begin the nitty-gritty work of building an ongoing relationship within which quality services can be delivered. The lesson conveyed earlier cannot be emphasized strongly enough: *the relationship between the Workforce Board and its operator(s) must be continuously nurtured and improved; it does not end when the Charter is signed, it is just beginning.*

Both the Board and the One-Stop Operator have a mutual responsibility for their relationship. It is the operator's responsibility to invest in continuous quality improvement and the Workforce Board's responsibility to hold the operator accountable for doing so. The Board must do everything possible to provide an environment in which no operator can fail to achieve its performance goals. What this means is that the Workforce Board has two primary roles to play in Phase Two: 1) ongoing oversight of the One-Stop Center's operations, and 2) removal of barriers and provision of technical assistance and support.

For example, suppose a One-Stop operator identifies a weakness in the system—inadequate support from the state's management information systems—which is beyond its control but which may be a barrier to achieving the Board's performance expectations. It is up to the Board to address this weakness, both with the operator and with the appropriate state agencies. If an optimal solution—such as updating state systems—can't be accomplished within the certification period, then the Board should collaborate with the operator to jointly define a temporary, alternative solution which won't negatively affect the operator's performance evaluation and recertification.

Attention to nurturing the entire One-Stop system is the charge given the Workforce Board by WIA. And from a quality assurance standpoint, nurturing quality and performance in all corners of the system should be a number one priority. The Board should require operators to meet quality standards and to conduct self-assessment and it should provide on-site reviews, feedback reports, technical assistance, training, and other ongoing support to help them do this. The Board must also be pro-active in demonstrating its own commitment to continuous improvement. Otherwise, capable operators and service providers—and customers—will leave the system altogether.

Post-Certification Audits & Review of Certification Agreement

One of the most effective methods the Board can utilize to support and encourage quality is the periodic on-site review, or post-certification audit. Once an operator or affiliate has been certified, post-certification audits should be conducted according to a periodic schedule outlined in the certification agreement. The purpose of these audits is to provide formal and regular opportunities for the Board and its operator to discuss the operator's performance with regard to specific goals and outcomes. The audits are also an opportunity to discuss any technical

assistance needed to help the supplier quickly and efficiently address any areas of concern. In addition to the audits, the Board should also conduct a separate review of the certification agreement to ensure that the operator's overall quality improvement systems, as they were described in the agreement and as they appeared to the Review Team during the initial site-visit, are still capable of meeting the requirements of the partnership.

The value of conducting periodic audits and reviews of the certification agreement is that it is only by regularly visiting your career centers that you will be able to confirm the reality of what your operators report to you on paper. We call them "audits," although "visits" might be a less stressful term. Regardless of what term you use, it is imperative that they occur and that they be used as strategic opportunities by both the operator and Workforce Board Review Team to ask questions, receive clarification, review the operator's performance at that point in time, and, most importantly, arrive at a mutual understanding of steps for improvement to be taken before the next audit.

Certification Period & Decertification

The recommended duration of a certification period is two to three years. A two to three-year cycle has been found to be ample time for an operator to implement necessary improvements in systems and to meet initial performance outcomes. However, if the certification process is a sound one, a Workforce Board should be able to decertify an ineffective operator whenever it is clear that quality concerns have not been addressed satisfactorily, irrespective of the actual length of the certification cycle. In this way, accountability can still be maintained.

If significant problems arise during the audit process, the Board should recommend corrective action. In some quality assurance programs, suppliers are allowed to "fail" to meet *one* aspect of the agreement without decertification as long as the recommended corrective action is immediately and successfully implemented. While this "one strike and you're out" scheme may be the rule in the private sector, it may not be realistic for the workforce investment system at this time.

Therefore, we recommend that workforce development suppliers (operators, affiliates, training providers, etc.) be allowed up to *three* failures during their first year of certification and between *one and two* failures during the second year of certification. Built into these allowances must be mutual agreement that: 1) *The supplier will do everything it can to successfully implement the recommended corrective action(s); and 2) The Workforce Board will do everything it can to support the supplier's efforts through technical assistance and guidance. If, however, it becomes clear via the post-certification audits that the supplier's overall continuous improvement efforts have veered sharply from those described in the original agreement, the supplier may then be immediately decertified.*

PHASE TWO STEPS

The primary steps to be taken in Phase Two are similar to those taken during Phase One except that the application process and the certification decision are absent from this phase. What changes in Phase Two, however, is the focus. Now that the applicant has become an operator—a fully vested partner in the local One-Stop system—the focus becomes one of supporting and growing that partnership to bring about a shared One-Stop vision.

Since Phase Two takes place over a much longer period of time than Phase One, a comprehensive timeframe must be established which outlines the delivery dates of major and minor milestones that need to be reached in order to accomplish the goals of the original certification agreement. For example, some certification models require operators to conduct an annual self-assessment, and others only require one self-assessment toward the end of the certification period, prior to recertification. Obviously, annual self-assessments would require an operator to deploy different time and process management strategies than would a one-time assessment at the end of the contract period.

It is important for the Workforce Board and operator(s) to work in tandem to jointly define and clearly articulate the timeframe and delivery dates for all expectations (performance, administrative, or otherwise) associated with this primary phase of the relationship.

1. Reconfirm, revise and expand your One-Stop system vision and quality standards as necessary

Information received from applicants during the initial certification phase may result in a reconsideration of your Workforce Board's One-Stop vision as well as your quality standards. In the spirit of continuous improvement and keeping a two-way communication flow open, these considerations may (and should) influence changes in your vision and standards. This can best be accomplished either through the full Workforce Board or through a smaller working group of the Board (such as the Standards Committee), and in conjunction with the operator(s).

Any revisiting of your system's vision and quality standards should include the following areas:

- *The integrity of your One-Stop vision*
- *The appropriateness of your quality standards to achieving your vision*
- *Gaps in system oversight*
- *The viability of attracting the best and most capable Operators*
- *The strength of currently certified Operators as potential long-term partners in your system*
- *The appropriateness of each Operator's systems and processes for meeting your standards*

Any resulting changes or revisions to your vision or your quality standards should then be immediately communicated to operators, affiliates and service providers both verbally and in writing. Also, action plans, business plans, and other time- or performance-critical agreements outlined in the original certification contract need to be amended and signed by both the operator and the Workforce Board.

2. *Require another self-assessment and revision of the Operator's business plan if needed*

3. *Conduct post-certification audits of One-Stop Operators*

Again, the best way to know what's really happening in your system is to review, review, review (or audit, audit, audit)! *But, do not schedule so many reviews that your operators are so busy and burdened with participating in the audit that they have no time or energy to serve their customers!*

4. *Feedback report*

5. *Technical assistance, training, support*

PHASE THREE - RECERTIFICATION

Phase Three, the recertification phase, begins about eight months prior to the end of the second year of the certification period. Again, there is very close overlap between the steps to be taken in this phase and those taken during Phases One and Two.

The primary difference in Phase 3 is that the recertification decision could also entail a decision to *decertify* an operator—to revoke its license to operate and deny further public funds to operate an official One-Stop career center. It also could include the decision to seek out new operators to become workforce investment partners. There are a number of ways to go about establishing a protocol for these decisions, if they become necessary. For example, whatever policy you create related to decertification of unperforming operators during Phase Two could also be used as a basis for denying recertification to an incumbent operator who is applying for recertification.

- 1. Update your quality standards based on the Baldrige categories***
- 2. Require a self-assessment and revision of business plan by the recertification applicant***
- 3. Completion of application***
- 4. On-site review/audit***
- 5. Feedback report***
- 6. Recertification decision***
- 7. Technical assistance, training, support***

NOTE: Although this is the end of the model, you aren't finished yet. In fact, you are never really "finished." A continuous improvement approach to growing your One-Stop system requires that you perpetually revisit your original assumptions, ideas, and, especially, your ways of doing things. Never rest on your laurels and remember, quality is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end.

Conclusion

Congratulations! You have reached the end of this Guidebook. Hopefully the concepts and examples contained here, combined with the model presented in Section Four and the tools in the Appendix, have given you plenty of ideas to start you down the road to creating a supplier certification process for your local workforce development system. As you carry on your work, remember to focus on keeping dialogue open and moving forward, and to utilizing the talents, input, time, and energy of as many people as you can in order to build deep and ongoing support for your vision. Most importantly, remember that along the way you are guaranteed to experience numerous successes and setbacks. But so long as you are committed to vesting your local system with ever-increasing quality, successes and setbacks will be seen for what they really are: synonyms for opportunity.

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Appendix: Tools and Templates

- 1. Certification Criteria/Measures Template #1**
- 2. Certification Criteria/Measures Template #2**
- 3. Certification Criteria/Measures Template #3**
- 4. Self-Assessment Tool**
- 5. Business Plan Component Checklist**
- 6. Certification Application Package**
- 7. On-Site Review Checklist Template**
- 8. Feedback Report Template**

Baldrige-Based Certification Criteria/Measures Templates

Following are three certification criteria/measurement templates. The first is a basic template which allows you simply to simply define the criteria for each of the seven Baldrige categories (standards) and then list the measurements of success or progress for those criteria. The second is a template which allows you to divide the certification process into two phases—provisional and final—allowing you to define your criteria in terms of an evolving process. Finally, the third template is geared toward a certification process in which several levels of quality will be acknowledged within the system. It enables you to begin to define your criteria and measures according to a continuum which encourages organizations to continuously strive for ever-increasing levels of quality within your system.

Baldrige-Based Certification Criteria/Measures
Template #1 : Basic

<i>Baldrige Criteria</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
Leadership		
Strategic Planning		
Customer and Market Focus		
Information and Analysis		
Human Resource Focus		
Process Management		
Business Results		

Baldrige-Based Certification Criteria/Measures
Template #2: Provisional and Certification Phase

Provisional Phase					Certification Phase		
<i>Baldrige Criteria</i>	<i>Pre-Application</i>	<i>Provisional</i>	<i>Certification Year I</i>	<i>Certification Year II</i>	<i>Certification Year III</i>		
Leadership							
Strategic Planning							
Customer and Market Focus							
Information and Analysis							
Human Resource Focus							
Process Management							
Business Results							

Baldrige-Based Certification Criteria/Measures
Template #3: Tiered Certification Levels

Criteria		Measures		
	Level I	Level II	Level III	
	LEADERSHIP			
	STRATEGIC PLANNING			
	CUSTOMER AND MARKET FOCUS			
	INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS			

Baldrige-Based Certification Criteria/Measures
Template #3: Tiered Certification Levels

Criteria		Measures		
	Level I	Level II	Level III	
	HUMAN RESOURCE FOCUS			
	PROCESS MANAGEMENT			
	BUSINESS RESULTS			

Sample Certification Self Assessment Tool

The sample self-assessment tool provides examples of the seven Baldrige assessment categories and specific items related to the operations of a One-Stop Center. The tool is written from the standpoint of a Workforce Board evaluating a prospective One-Stop operator applying for certification. But it can also be adapted and used by any stakeholder or partner in your local system, such as an already certified One-Stop operator evaluating an affiliate or partner for their ability to meet certification standards.

Applicants for certification should create teams to discuss each of the certification criteria. During the discussion, the teams will evaluate where the organization falls along a continuum. Each team member should score each of the items individually. Then the team should discuss the individual scores and reach consensus on an overall score for that criteria. Team members should try to cite examples that will assist in describing where they think the organization is.

In continuous improvement, you are never done with your improvement strategy. Having a score or a number to rate yourselves can be a distraction. Continuous improvement requires that those involved in the self-assessment not just accept the ratings, but to then embark on a strategy for improving on the results of the assessment. Constant progress is the goal.

1. LEADERSHIP

All levels of leadership demonstrate a belief in integrated service delivery and regularly articulate that belief to staff.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Top administrators are personally visible in efforts to learn about and focus on customers.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING

All workforce investment partners participate in setting strategic directions.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

People know what the strategic plan requires of their daily work.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Each of the processes that underpin an integrated delivery system are operated in a consistent manner within and across agencies.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

There are processes and practices in place that foster good communication within the workforce investment system.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Staff within each partner agency can articulate what each agency does and how they do it against the strategic directions.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

The product line and service menu is up to date based on current customer and labor market data.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

There are strategy and action plans to align current technologies across agencies and to incorporate the most effective and up to date technology.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Services are of consistent quality across agencies and these services are built and/or abandoned based on customer needs and demographics.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

3. CUSTOMER AND MARKET FOCUS

The workforce investment system enhances the satisfaction of its customers by reducing the number of hand-offs and insuring that the hand-offs are accurate the first time.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

The workforce investment system enhances the satisfaction of its customers by reducing the redundancies in data collection.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

The workforce investment system enhances the satisfaction of its customers by providing environmentally pleasant surroundings.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

The workforce investment system meets customer expectations through insuring that staff are credible, professional and friendly.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

The workforce investment system meets customer expectations through ongoing identification and consistent use of workforce skill standards.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

The workforce investment system meets customer expectations by getting customers what they need.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Customers have easy access to all services.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

The employer customer is provided qualified applicants each and every time.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Services, both initial and ongoing, are initiated in a timely fashion.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

The workforce investment system determines customer requirements, expectations, and preferences through varied data collection mechanisms.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

4. INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

The workforce investment system continuously uses data and information to evaluate itself and improve performance.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Decisions about what data to collect are guided by consistent criteria.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Data is reliable.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Data is immediately available to the system workers who need it to make decisions about work processes.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Benchmarks are established against world class systems similar to us.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

5. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Work is designed, organized and managed to promote empowered employees.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Work is designed, organized and managed to promote team-based problem solving and decision making.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Employee knowledge and skills are developed based on progressive models of human service delivery.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Employees demonstrate respect and value for each others' knowledge and skills within and across agencies.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

6. PROCESS MANAGEMENT

Service delivery processes are designed to transfer data and information from agency to agency.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

System partners offer capabilities and competencies that directly support the products and services customer want.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Processes are in place to ensure that customers experience a “one stop” approach to information collection about them.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Communication mechanisms, including technology, used to communicate between agencies and workers about customers, services, and practice encourage and easily facilitate information sharing between agencies, centers, work units, and individual staff members.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Processes and tools used ensure that customers are provided access to all partners’ programs and other community programs.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Customers are provided accurate, timely consumer report information to assist them in making choices among service and training providers.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

7. BUSINESS RESULTS

All our services contribute to meeting customer needs.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Employers regularly choose to use our system to meet their needs.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

Customers articulate that they get what they want.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

The system has clearly articulated outcomes that are known to all and are measured consistently within the system.

Individual Score: _____

Consensus Score: _____

See next page for Scoring Sheet

Quality Standards Self-Assessment Scoring Sheet

Scoring refers to the process of identifying strengths, areas for improvement and issues for on-site review.

0%-9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anecdotal only• No system evident
10%-40%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beginning of a systemic approach to addressing the primary purpose of the indicator• Early stages of a transition from reacting to problems to preventing problems• Very early stages of developing trend data• Data not reported for many of the key processes
40%-60%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beginnings of a CQI process in place• Beginning to be deployed in pockets of the organization
60%-90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fact-based improvement process is in place• Approaches beginning to be saturated in all relevant areas and activities• Some trends and current performance are evaluated against relevant comparison benchmarks
90%-100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fact-based improvement process is a key management tool• Clear evidence of improvements as a result of improvement cycles and analysis• Fully saturated• Excellent improvement trends• Sustained excellent performance

SCORING NOTES

- 100% means saturation, that the goals of the item are integrated into normal operations.
- Above 50% means that learning, refinement, maturation, integration and deployment are taking place.
- 50% means your organization has a sound approach for accomplishing the purposes addressed in the criteria and this approach is having a positive effect on most of the people and operations addressed in this item.
- Below 50% means that many of the organization's activities are reactive. It may reflect the beginnings of a systematic approach.
- 0% means that a systematic approach is entirely lacking. The agency's approach to quality may be entirely or largely reactive or "ad hoc."

Sample Business Plan Component Checklist for One-Stop Career Center Certification Application

This sample business plan component checklist provides examples of major categories and specific items which comprise a thorough business plan geared toward an application for Career Center certification. The checklist can be used by a Workforce Board that is evaluating a prospective operator for certification. It can also be used to develop a standard business plan format for use by any stakeholder or partner in your local system, such as an already certified operator evaluating an affiliate or partner for their ability to meet certification standards.

The checklist contains two types of information. First is a series of “framing” questions for the center operator to consider when developing each section. The questions are designed to ensure comprehensive thinking about the center and its operations. These questions are not exhaustive, but are designed to prompt teams to think strategically about what they are proposing. Second are the major areas to be addressed and included in the business plan.

NAMES OF CENTERS

A bidder may submit a name used to identify the career center for which a bid is made. The Workforce Investment Board reserves the right to select center name(s), to require a standard name for all centers in the service area, or to select any other identification system which meets the intent of the workforce investment system.

BUSINESS PLAN FORMAT

Defining the Business

Framing Questions:

- Why is the career center being established? What is its primary business objective?
- What is the concise definition of the core business as it relates to the local labor market?
- Who comprises the center's current and/or proposed customer base?
- What location has been chosen for the center and why?
- What is the center's relationship to other community service providers?

Areas to Address:

_____ Vision and mission are clearly defined and consistent with Workforce Investment Board/System vision.

_____ Operator's/partners' vision and mission reflects new approach to Career Center operations, including emphasis on customer-focus, service integration, and measurable results.

Management Plan

Framing Questions:

- What is the center's management structure?
- What is the background and expertise of key management and operations staff who influence success or failure?
- What is the relationship between center management and staff?
- What center-wide policies and procedures are needed or are being established?
- What staff are needed? What are their duties?
- What structures are already in place (corporate status, personnel structures, financial management structures, legal assistance)? What will need to be developed or acquired?
- What will the center actually manage and what will be managed by other service providers?
- What employee development strategies are in place or planned?

Areas to Address:

- _____ Identifies management structure, including organizational chart, job titles by department, division or function, the integration of services through a description of the relationships between all partners, and the management process for decisions made on the basis of center goals, objectives, and business plan.
- _____ Includes MOUs signed by all partners and showing active participation in or electronic linkage with center(s), and agreement to serve in the management structure.
- _____ Identifies the most important staff skills and competencies needed to meet goals and objectives, and short- and long-term plans for ongoing investment in employee training to ensure a competent and highly motivated staff.
- _____ Demonstrates how centers are committed to employee empowerment and team building through “de-layering” of decision-making, cross-training of staff, and creation of cross-functional work teams.
- _____ Describes evidence of management commitment to creating/maintaining an employee-friendly environment, including an effective labor relations structure and mechanisms for obtaining and using employee feedback for continuous improvement.
- _____ Plan/process exists for rewarding and recognizing employee excellence.
- _____ Clearly indicates staff positions primarily responsible for oversight of all customer satisfaction and for continuous improvement.
- _____ Identifies a clear plan for providing neutral brokering services, including reasonable percentages of referrals to center-related entities.
- _____ Describes strategy for preparing for and recovering from issues and problems that arise.

Service Delivery Plan***Framing Questions:***

- What are the primary products and services of the center(s)?
- Who are the targeted customers of each product and service (i.e., employers or individuals)?
- Who will provide these products and services?
- Who will pay for the products and services?
- What information will be needed to determine what future products and services will be delivered by the center? How will that information be obtained?
- How will products and services be accessed by customers? Is there a good, functional resource center available for customer use?

Areas to Address - Employers:

- _____ Clearly shows a plan to increase employer use of center(s).
- _____ Identifies performance measures for employer customers which support center and system objectives.
- _____ Describes how employer satisfaction is surveyed, including frequency and results, as well as how survey results are disseminated to staff and others.
- _____ Identifies plan for improvement in actual results.
- _____ Describes a mechanism to identify any needed technical assistance in working with employers.

Areas to Address - Individual Job Seekers:

- _____ Clearly shows a plan for increasing individual customer use of center(s) through universal access and/or enrollment in various programs.
- _____ Includes diagram of customer flow through core services.
- _____ Demonstrates clear flow of services between all partners.
- _____ Identifies performance measures related to individual customers which support center and system objectives.
- _____ Describes how individual customer satisfaction is surveyed, including frequency and results, as well as how survey results are disseminated to staff and others. Identifies plan for improvement in actual results.
- _____ Describes a mechanism to identify the need for technical assistance in working with individual customers.
- _____ Clearly outlines core services, as required by the Workforce Investment Act, and intensive services and identifies provider(s) of each core and intensive service.
- _____ Identifies a system for referrals to training services.
- _____ Identifies the use of ITAs, including planned service level and estimated cost.
- _____ Demonstrates knowledge of and linkage with educational grants, student loans, and other education support/financial aid programs.

Marketing Plan***Framing Questions:***

- What is the short and long-term marketing strategy?
- How does the center define its market?
- What market analysis exists? What analysis needs to be done?
- What is the center's market niche in the community?
- What is the center's forecast for growth and how is it justified?

Areas to Address:

- _____ Describes the marketing need for the service area and planned measures of marketing success, including a plan to increase employer and job-seeker use of center(s) and ensuring community-wide recognition of center(s) as a valuable resource.
- _____ Clearly defined plan exists for establishing market presence of center(s), including a market presence baseline and identification of market niche.
- _____ Identifies marketing pieces to be developed, such as TV, Internet, radio and print campaigns, and linkage with other partners' marketing divisions are established and maintained by a dedicated staff position.
- _____ Identifies any need for technical assistance and marketing capacity building.

Technology Plan

Framing Questions:

- What are the technology needs of the center?
- What plans are already in place to achieve full technological capacity?
- Are the center partners prepared to create and use integrated management information?
- Are technology and MIS needs being defined and linked to customer needs?

Areas to Address:

- _____ Clearly describes the plan to assure state-of-the-art technology for both customers and staff.
- _____ Describes electronic linkages between partners and how linkages will be maintained, including types of subcontractors, consultants, or staff positions.
- _____ Lists software planned for use and its compatibility with required programs and reporting systems.
- _____ Clearly identifies staff positions providing oversight, staff and partner training, maintenance, repair, reporting, supervision of technology staff, and other information that indicates emphasis on a high level of technology and use.
- _____ Describes any technology links with planned satellite, affiliate or specialty centers, and with all other One-Stop centers.

Process Management Plan/ Measuring Success

Framing Questions:

- How will the center(s) measure success against the Workforce Board's certification criteria?
- What are the major milestones of success?
- How will center management recognize and reward success among center staff?
- How will center(s) ensure that suppliers and partners are committed to achieving, measuring and documenting success?
- What types of information will need to be collected in order to meet certification criteria and support continuous improvement?

Areas to Address:

- _____ Identifies how center(s) will be prepared to establish and track baseline outcomes based on center performance measures, and to use outcomes data for continuous improvement.
- _____ Describes continuous improvement strategies, how all levels of center staff will be involved, and the planned timeframe for implementing continuous improvement throughout centers.
- _____ Describes the link between customer satisfaction information and its use in the continuous improvement process, including the process for sharing customer satisfaction results internally and externally.
- _____ Describes strategy for ensuring supplier commitment to success and using supplier performance data to support continuous improvement of supplier performance, as well as overall center performance, e.g., providing supplier performance data to customers, improving referrals to suppliers.
- _____ Describes how improvement data will be used in policy decisions.

Location, Facilities, Operations

Framing Questions:

- What is the center's service delivery structure, i.e., location, service mix and customer flow?
- What is the status of operations; what is the time frame for moving to full scale?
- What special transition provisions will be needed?
- What other location and access issues will affect the center(s) (i.e., customer flow, ADA compliance, available parking and public transportation, effective signage, safe environment)?
- Are there other influences which affect operations, such as access to resources or time frames?

Areas to Address:

- _____ Identifies location(s) (or possible sites) tied to the needs within the service areas for center services, including general population and employers.
- _____ Provides a detailed description of building(s) or proposed building(s), including square footage and the ratio of parking spaces to square footage. Identify each building as either full-service or affiliate.
- _____ Describes the conditions of furniture, equipment, telephone service, etc. (or planned if not currently available). Furniture, etc. provided by partners should be valued and included in in-kind contributions in the Financial Plan.
- _____ Describes how services will be provided through any affiliated center(s). If electronic linkages only will be used, describes the technology plan for affiliates. If affiliates will be staffed, provides job titles, services available (by partner), hours of operation, and staff responsible for oversight of affiliates.
- _____ Identifies public transportation access and/or plan to center(s) or proposed center(s).

Financial Plan

Framing Questions:

- What is the current budget and what are the sources and levels of funding?
- What is the projected budget, cash flow and break-even analysis; what are the underlying assumptions, i.e., how are they related to the growth forecast and marketing plan?
- What new funding opportunities have been identified for future growth, i.e., grants, fee-for-service, etc.?
- Who will be responsible for raising funds?

Areas to Address:

- _____ Identifies revenue and resources needed to meet planned service levels and enumerates various cash and in-kind sources provided by partners and affiliates.
- _____ Planned costs of all facilities is identified.
- _____ Financial strategy for long-term sustainability exists.
- _____ Describes how fee-for-services will be implemented for employers and individuals, including timeline and estimated revenue.
- _____ Demonstrates ability to manage ITAs, supportive service payments, and payments of all invoices for the center.
- _____ Identifies insurance coverage and estimated annual cost.

Sample Certification Application Package

The sample certification application package below includes generic instructions for completing the package; core and intensive services checklists; and required indicators of quality within each of the seven Baldrige categories. The package should also include the self-assessment tool and a business plan format described elsewhere in this Appendix.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION

The Quality Standards

The Workforce Investment Board has defined the following quality standards for a one-stop career center. These standards define Quality for becoming designated as a [FILL-IN NAME OF ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER SYSTEM] center. To be identified as part of the [FILL-IN NAME OF CAREER CENTER SYSTEM] network, an entity must be certified as having processes and practices in place which meet or exceed these standards.

1. Leadership
2. Strategic Planning
3. Customer and Market Focus
4. Information and Analysis
5. Human Resource Focus
6. Process Management
7. Business Results

Who is eligible?

Any public, private, for-profit, or not for profit organization delivering workforce development services is eligible. This application package is designed to assist each site in examining where they are regarding the quality criteria and to promote continuous improvement toward the criteria.

The Process

There is a three-step process for becoming certified. The first is a Self-Assessment. The second is the completion of an Application Process. The third is an On-Site Review. These certification standards are set high. Training and technical assistance is available to support those interested in achieving this level of quality.

Step One: Self Assessment

Conduct a self-assessment using the self-assessment tool. This self-assessment is meant as a reflective exercise to assist an organization in understanding how far it may be from meeting or exceeding the standards. The self-assessment should help an organization in answering the questions for the certification application and to know which strategies and processes may need to be implemented prior to submitting the application. *A self-assessment must be completed to fill out the application. However, your own self-assessment score will not affect your overall rating.*

Step Two: Application Process

Based on the self-assessment, each site is expected to complete the application package by completing the core and intensive services checklists, and by answering the questions related to each of the quality standards. This package describes the type of information needed to demonstrate how your organization is meeting each criterion. You may provide whatever other relevant information you find in your self-assessment process. For each criterion, you must describe how you expect to continue to improve the quality of the processes used to meet the criteria. If you are below minimum on certain criteria, you are expected to address how you will reach minimum levels. If you are at minimum levels, you are expected to address how you will exceed them and what your continuous improvement strategy will be. If you are exceeding the minimum standards, you are expected to describe your continuous improvement strategies and ideas for continuing to meet the criteria at high levels of performance.

Step Three: On-Site Examination

A site visit from a designated evaluation or review team will take place. This on-site review will occur after receipt of the application package. You may submit the application whenever you are ready. Certification is an ongoing process that will start when the application is received. Upon receipt of the application, a team of three to four reviewers will come on site to meet with your team. During this time, the reviewers will examine the application and interview the team. The purpose of this approach is to ensure that the site will continue to strive to meet and exceed the certification criteria over the next year.

The Rating and Certification

Descriptions of an organization's approach to each quality standard will be reviewed against:

- How the approach assists in improving performance and in producing positive outcomes.
- What continuous improvement strategies are in place to improve on the criteria.
- How skill standards are integrated as part of the criteria, when appropriate.

Certification to become a designated center will rely on the score received on the application package and the on-site review. Certification as a center under this process will remain valid for two years. Centers will be eligible for recertification between eighteen and twenty-two months after certification.

The Workforce Investment Act vests in the local Workforce Board, with the agreement of the chief elected official, the authorization to designate or certify one-stop operators and to terminate for cause the eligibility of such operators. This certification application document is in draft format, as it is the purview of the local Board to establish, evaluate, and monitor the criteria for certification in their area. The local Board is anticipated to revise and enhance this draft work.

Continued on next page

APPLICATION

To complete this application, verify as present each element of the core services and all applicable intensive services on the following checklists. Then, describe how your organization meets the indicator for each of the quality standards. If all the indicators are not yet in place, describe the plan for how and when processes and strategies will be in place.

Core Services Checklist

Please check all that apply.

The ability to offer all of the services listed below is required.

A description of each is required in Criteria 6.C.

- _____ Determination of eligibility
- _____ Outreach, intake and orientation
- _____ Initial assessment
- _____ Job search and placement assistance
- _____ Employment statistics information: job listings, skills needed, demand occupations
- _____ Performance information and program cost information on eligible providers
- _____ Information on how the local area is performing on performance measures
- _____ Accurate information on the availability of support services
- _____ Information on filing for unemployment compensation
- _____ Assistance in establishing eligibility for Welfare-to-Work activities and financial assistance
- _____ Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the first day of employment (includes job counseling)

Intensive Services Checklist

Please check all that apply.

Access to all of these intensive services is required.

A description of each is required in Criteria 6.D.

- _____ Comprehensive assessment
- _____ Diagnostic testing
- _____ Evaluation of barriers to employment and employment goals
- _____ Development of an individual employment plan
- _____ Counseling
- _____ Career planning
- _____ Case management
- _____ Pre-vocational services

Questions About Indicators of Quality Related to the Seven Quality Standards

Please respond to each question as thoroughly as you can.

1. LEADERSHIP

- A. Describe the leadership's current vision of the organization. How is the vision communicated to the staff, and what specifically does the leadership do to insure that its values are being implemented in the workplace?
- B. How does the organization measure the effectiveness of its leadership?
- C. Describe how the organization sets strategic directions to better define and strengthen itself regarding customers, the environment, financial risks, organizational capacity, and partners' capacity?
- D. Summarize the organization's goals and objectives and how they are implemented in ways that support the vision and values.
- E. Describe how top leadership uses customer data.

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING

- A. Describe the strategic planning process for the organization.
- B. Describe how leadership aligns internal processes to accomplish the goals of the organization.
- C. Describe how staff use the strategic plan.
- D. Describe what mechanisms are in place for staff to communicate across agencies. Describe how corrections are made when services and processes are found to be misaligned across agencies.

3. CUSTOMER AND MARKET FOCUS

- A. Describe the methods used to collect, analyze and use customer satisfaction data. Identify the key elements customers measure, i.e., timeliness, outcomes, environment, etc. What is the current satisfaction rate against these key elements?
- B. Identify where Workforce Skill Standards are used in service delivery and staff development. How are Workforce Skill Standards made known to the customer?
- C. Compare how customer flow has changed to ensure reduced and more accurate handoff between agencies; reduced redundancies in data collection among agencies; and how customers access all services to the way these things occurred before changes were put in place.
- D. Provide the most recent information on employer satisfaction with the applicants referred and with those hired.

4. INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

- A. Describe the continuous quality improvement (CQI) methods used in the organization.
- B. Describe the benchmarking process used.
- C. Describe how all levels of staff are involved in the CQI process and how improvement data is used from the desk level to the policy level.

5. HUMAN RESOURCE FOCUS

- A. Attach a copy of the agency (or interagency) training plan.
- B. Describe the process for developing and implementing a staff training plan.
- C. Identify and describe the organizational structure and how this structure promotes empowering employees and team based problem solving.
- D. Describe the ethics (i.e., customer choice, customer participation, etc.) promoted by the organization for service delivery. How do staff know these ethical expectations?

6. PROCESS MANAGEMENT

- A. Describe which processes are in place to ensure that customers experience a “one stop” approach to information collection about them.
- B. Describe the communication mechanisms, including technology, used to communicate between agencies and workers about customers, services, and practice.
- C. Identify (use the checklist) and describe the core services available and the processes used to ensure access by customers.
- D. Identify (use the checklist) and describe the intensive services available and the processes used to ensure access by customers.
- E. Describe the processes and tools used to ensure customers are provided access to partners’ programs and other community programs.
- F. Describe the process by which customers are provided accurate, timely consumer report information to assist them in making choices among service and training providers.

7. BUSINESS RESULTS

- A. How do you measure outcomes?
- B. How do customers provide feedback about their expectations and changing needs?
- C. Do businesses seek out your services? How?

Sample On-Site Review Checklist Template

A checklist like this should be used by an independent Review Team to conduct a review of a center (and center operator) to determine if it can be certified as meeting all required quality criteria for operating as an official One-Stop Career Center. Below are a few sample pages to provide you a format to adapt to your own locally-designed Baldrige-based standards and criteria.

3. Customer and Market Focus

Services to Employers

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1. The career center provides all of the following USDOL employer services without fee in the geographic area serviced by the center:			
a. Job matching and referral services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
b. WARN and rapid response services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
c. Placement of job orders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
d. On-site recruitment of prospective employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
e. Bonding services for high risk workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
f. WOTC certification for tax credits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
g. Information on accessing financial aid information that can be used to train worker (Specify the source or method used to confirm the center provides employers with this information).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____ _____ _____
h. Access to economic development information (Specify the source or method used to confirm the center provides employers with access to this information).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____ _____ _____
2 . The Career Center has USDOL employer services available on each regular business day (defined as state, county or municipal working days).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____ _____ _____

4. Information and Analysis

1. The Career Center has structured customer feedback Mechanisms which provide input in at least the following areas:			
a. Customer satisfaction with those services being provided by the center. (Describe the mechanisms used to determine customer satisfaction with these services).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____ _____ _____

- b. Whether the center is providing those specific services its customers most desire. *(Describe the mechanisms used to determine that this is the case).* ☐ ☐ _____

- c. Why potential employers are choosing not to use center services. *(Describe the mechanisms used to determine why employers are not choosing to use center services).* ☐ ☐ _____

6. Process Management

1. At a minimum, the approach or process utilized by the Career Center to ensure continuous improvement involves all center Partners not less frequently than monthly in:
- a. Reviewing the input received. *(Describe the approach or process used to review input received by all partners).* ☐ ☐ _____

- b. Determining those specific actions to be taken based on the input. *(Describe the approach or process used to determine those actions)* ☐ ☐ _____

- c. Reporting the results of the input, and the related actions taken, to an appropriate center governing body not less frequently than quarterly. *(Describe the approach or process used to report results to the governing body).* ☐ ☐ _____

SUMMARY INFORMATION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Requirement (Baldrige Criteria)	Number of "No" Boxes Checked
Leadership	
Strategic Planning	
Customer and Market Focus	
Information and Analysis	
Human Resource Focus	
Process Management	
Business Results	

Review Team Recommendations:

Sample Feedback Report Template

Purpose: purpose of the report; name of site reviewer

Background: common background piece in each report

Site Description: site name, location, partners; impression of the site from customer perspective, including the following:

- Parking/transportation availability
- Hours of operation
- Signage
- Environment
- Resource Room
- Staff

Summary of Observations and Interviews: overall impressions after meeting with center staff; identify what the Center is doing to meet the certification criteria. For example:

1. Leadership

How often do the leaders meet?

How do they use customer data for CQI?

How do they communicate what is occurring at the center inside their individual agencies?

How has the center changed the way daily business gets done?

2. Strategic Planning

Is there a strategic plan for the operator (or partnership)? For the center?

Does staff know that one exists?

How is it used?

How does the operator or partnership hold itself accountable to the strategic plan?

What is the process for strategic planning?

3. Customer and Market Focus

Do both customer groups use the center (employers and job seekers)? How?

How is customer data collected?

How is it used for CQI?

4. Information and Analysis

How does the center use customer data and performance data for CQI?

How is information shared?

How often is customer information reviewed?

5. Human Resource Focus

Is there a formal training plan that is for the one-stop system, not agency by agency?

Is there a systematic approach to cross-training staff?

What are some of the topics that have been covered in cross-training?

Do staff receive training on the skills and competencies required of staff within a one-stop environment?

6. Process Management

Integration

How often are staff from partner agencies here (days and hours)?

How do staff like their schedule?

Do staff view working at the one-stop center as being different from when they worked at the "home" office? If so, how?

What do staff think were the initial challenges to working together as co-located staff?

Have these challenges been overcome? If so, how?

How has the center gone beyond co-location to integration of technology, information, assessment, initial intake, and other service offerings?

Customer Flow

How have the customers responded to the center?

What is the value of this center versus the way business was conducted before the one-stop system was created?

What does this center still need to completely meet the one-stop vision of customer friendly, convenient customer service?

Center Operations

Who is on site and how many hours per week are they on site?

check attitude of staff toward customers and toward each other as team members; do they back each other up at reception, in the resource room, etc.?

How is the day-to-day operation organized?

How do staff communicate?

How do decisions on operational issues get made? How effective is this process?

7. Business Results

How is performance measured?

How is customer satisfaction data used?

Are the goals set forth in the strategic plan being met?

Is each agency using outcomes achieved through the center to assist with performance measures mandated for each separate agency?

Plans for the Future: discuss challenges cited by center staff and areas already targeted for improvement.

Recommendations for Improvement: identify any areas that have been overlooked by center staff and offer feedback on opportunities for improvement.

Excellence In One-Stops Guidebook

For More Information

If you would like additional copies of this publication or more information about other Workforce Excellence Network products, or if you need assistance with your continuous improvement journey, please call or fax any of the following representatives at your nearest regional office of the Employment and Training Administration or visit our Web Site at www.workforce-excellence.net.

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